



3 3333 05991 9643

REPERSED

J-590

Qash

9927

The hundred best animals



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

THE HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

TO MY MOTHER



Fr.

Giraffe

THE HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

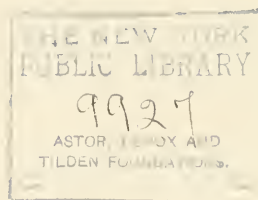
BY
LILIAN GASK

AUTHOR OF
'IN NATURE'S SCHOOL' 'TRUE STORIES ABOUT DOGS'
'TRUE STORIES ABOUT HORSES'
'LEGENDS OF OUR LITTLE BROTHERS' ETC.

WITH ONE HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS BY AUG. F. W. VOGT



NEW YORK
THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS



C 570
G

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. IN THE GREY MAN'S DEN . . .	13
II. MORE LION STORIES . . .	21
III. THE LION'S FIRST COUSIN . . .	30
IV. THREE MORE BIG CATS. . . .	41
V. CAT COUSINS	51
VI. THE DOG TRIBE	62
VII. ANIMALS THAT LAUGH . . .	74
VIII. THE STORY OF HAIRY-FOOT . . .	83
IX. MORE ABOUT BEARS	94
X. SEALS AND WALRUSES	106
XI. THE HORSE TRIBE	115
XII. "MY LORD THE ELEPHANT" . . .	130
XIII. THE PIG TRIBE	142
XIV. "A QUEER-LOOKING BEAST" . . .	152
XV. THE KING OF THE APES	159
XVI. MONKEYS AND MONKEY TALES . . .	170

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVII. MORE MONKEYS ; BABOONS AND LEMURS	180
XVIII. THE TALLEST ANIMAL IN THE WORLD	191
XIX. CAMELS AND LLAMAS	199
XX. HOOFS AND HORNS	208
XXI. ANTELOPES AND DEER	217
XXII. ANIMALS THAT GNAW	229
XXIII. SLOTHS, ANT-EATERS, AND ARMADILLOS	238
XXIV. SOME ANIMALS IN AUSTRALIA . .	245
XXV. BIRDS OF MANY LANDS	254
XXVI. BIRDS STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL .	264
XXVII. WINGED HUNTERS	277
XXVIII. SOME INTERESTING CREATURES .	285
XXIX. A FEW OF THE WATER-FOLK . .	297

ILLUSTRATIONS

GIRAFFE	<i>Frontispiece</i>
LIONESS	<i>Facing page</i> 14
LION	18
LIONESS	22
LIONESS	26
TIGER	30
JAGUAR	42
PUMA	43
LYNX	54
LYNX	55
LYNX	58
WOLF	68
HYENA	76
POLAR BEAR	86
POLAR BEAR WITH CUB	90
BROWN BEAR	98
SEA-LION	110

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

	<i>Facing page</i>
SHETLAND PONY	116
ZEBRA	124
WILD ASS	125
INDIAN ELEPHANT	132
WILD BOAR	148
HIPPOPOTAMUSES	149
AMERICAN TAPIR	156
INDIAN TAPIR	157
APE	160
ORANG-UTANS	161
CHIMPANZEE	164
MONKEYS	172
BABOON	180
RING-TAILED LEMURS	188
GIRAFFE	194
BACTRIAN CAMEL	204
DROMEDARY	205
LLAMA	206
BISON	208
BISON WITH YOUNG	209
YAK	210

ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Facing page</i>
ZEBU	212
GAYAL, BANTIN, AND BLESBOK	213
Y ANOA	214
MANED SHEEP	215
GNU	218
ELAND	219
WAPITI	220
ELK, OR MOOSE	224
MOLUCCAN DEER	225
REINDEER	226
FALLOW DEER	227
PORCUPINE	230
HARE	231
BEAVER RATS	234
BEAVER RATS IN FEAR	235
PATAGONIAN HARE	236
X SLOTH	238
ANT-EATER	239
KANGAROO AND YOUNG	246
KANGAROO	247
WOMBAT	250

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

	<i>Facing page</i>
SWAN AND CYGNETS	256
TURKEY	257
SEA-GULL	258
PELICAN	259
PELICANS	260
GREAT HERON	261
WHITE HERON	262
STORKS	262
HERONS	263
MARABOU STORKS	263
MARABOU STORK	264
PARADISE CRANE	265
CROWNED CRANE	266
FLAMINGOES	267
FLAMINGO	268
COCKATOO	269
GREY PARROT	270
PEACOCK	271
OSTRICH	272
EMU	273
PENGUIN	274

ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Facing page</i>
EAGLE	278
CRESTED EAGLE	279
WHITE-HEADED SEA-EAGLE	280
SOUTH AMERICAN EAGLE	281
FALCON	282
VULTURE	283
CONDOR	284
CROCODILE	285
GIANT TORTOISE	288
SEA TORTOISES, OR TURTLES	289
BOA CONSTRICTOR	290
GECKO	291
TREE FROGS	292
TOAD	294
GIANT SALAMANDER	295
LAKE FISH	298
PIKE	300
CARP	301
COD	302
STURGEON	303

THE HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

CHAPTER I

IN THE GREY MAN'S DEN

IT wouldn't be half bad here," said Val, "if Grandmother weren't such a sleepy head. Thomson says she won't wake up now until tea-time, and we've got to be 'quite quiet' till then."

Nancy wriggled from under the black fur rug, in which she had been a-bear-who-couldn't growl, and nodded her ruffled head.

"She's 'most as bad as the new baby," she remarked with a very deep sigh. "Mother says that he sleeps all day."

"He's a silly little thing!" said Val, frowning hard. But for the coming of that baby, he remembered, he would be at home, where no one used to mind what noise they made—so long as they didn't fire off popguns at meal times.

"We can't even play 'Red Indians,'" Nancy went on sadly. "And it won't be tea-time for two whole hours!"

"Three!" groaned poor Val, whose legs ached

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

from staying still. And Nancy groaned too, to keep him company.

Then a robin hopped from a frost-spangled bush on to the window ledge, and began to sing at the top of his voice. It didn't matter to him a bit if Grandmother Blake were disturbed from her nap, and he liked the look of the rosy children on the other side of the glass.

"Come out-out-out-out-out!" he piped; and Val caught Nancy's hand.

"See! It's left off snowing," he cried joyfully, "and nobody said we must stay indoors. Let's go and look at the Grey Man—we haven't seen him since Sunday."

The corner of Nancy's drooping mouth broke into twinkling dimples.

"Yes — let's!" she said. "P'raps he's Santa Claus, and has to hide till Christmas is properly here."

"What muffs girls are," said Valentine. "Didn't you see when he sat up to look at us the other day that his coat was brown, instead of red? Besides, he isn't smiley enough, and his face is all white and thin."

"But he's nice—I like him!" Nancy said, as she struggled into the hood and cloak Val tossed to her from the hall. "Grandmother says he was ever-so-brave before his back got hurt, and he was in lots of battles. And now he can't walk the littlest bit—he



Lioness

THE GREY MAN'S DEN

has to lie still all day. He doesn't belong to anyone, she says, and he's always 'not at home' when people go to see him."

"But he won't mind *us*," Val told her hopefully, as he stood on tiptoes to unfasten the hall door. He was slipping out when Nancy drew him back, her blue eyes very grave.

"If we're really going to call on him," she whispered, "we must take a card. Mother always does when she goes visiting."

"All right," said Val, quite sure that what 'Mother' did was right. For a moment he wondered where to find one, but a card in the letter-box caught his eye, and it seemed the very thing. One side was blank, and on this, obeying Nancy's instructions, he wrote his own name and hers.

"I've put 'ESQ.' to them both," he said, as they trotted off together. "It looks most awf'ly well, I think. Daddy has it on his letters."

The Grey Man lived in the square stone house just beyond the village green, and the twins, who had often peeped between the great iron gates since they came to stay with Grandmother Blake, were the only children he had seen for years. Those of the village were frightened of him, and took care to keep on the other side of the road. But Nancy and Val made up stories about him, and wondered what he did in his 'den.'

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"Jolly little beggars—I wish they'd come in!" the Grey Man thought each time he caught sight of them. Nancy had smiled at him more than once, for she liked the look of his gentle grey eyes and silvery hair, and was sure that he must be lonesome.

He was still on the couch beside the window when Val pulled the bell outside the gates, and waited to see what would happen. The clang that it gave made Nancy jump, but she stood her ground, for she didn't want Val to laugh. A minute later, and the gates swung back, as if of their own accord, while a very thin man dressed all in black threw open the hall door.

The children looked at each other, and neither spoke. Both were very red, and both wanted to run away. It was Nancy who first found courage.

"We're Valentine John and Nancy," she said, "and we've come to call on the Grey Man."

"You mean the Sturgeon-General," cried Val, who had learnt from his grandmother the Grey Man's rank.

"I'm sorry," the butler said politely, looking curiously at the card which Val had thrust into his hand, "but my master's not well enough to see you to-day."

Before he could shut the door again, a very loud knocking close at hand made him hastily say,

THE GREY MAN'S DEN

"Wait a minute, please!" and, putting the card on a silver tray, he carried it into the study.

On the front of the card the Grey Man read :

COAL! COAL! COAL!

Now is the time to buy!

"You'll find the names on the other side, Sir," said the butler solemnly, as he stared at it in surprise.

"'Bring them in?' Yes, certainly, Sir!"

And Nancy and Val were shown into the study as if, as Val said afterwards, they had been grand grown-ups.

The lofty room was glowing with firelight, and what they saw took their breath away. The head of a most magnificent Lion guarded one side of the picture above the mantelpiece; on the other was the head of an enormous Tiger, while in the centre of the wall hung that of a huge black buffalo, with very sharp horns, and glaring eyes. More savage beasts looked down from the oak panels, and their skins lay stretched on the polished floor.

The Grey Man had been a mighty hunter, and now his trophies kept him company.

"I say," said Val, "what a jolly room. I shouldn't mind lying here all day if I'd all these things to look at!"

"I think that sometimes you'd find it dull," said the Grey Man quietly. He smiled as he spoke—a queer little smile that somehow made Nancy sorry.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"Thank you for letting us in," she said, touching his sleeve with her small brown fingers. The Grey Man took them in his big ones, and held them close.

Val was still staring round him.

"Where did you get those animals?" he asked at last, glancing from one huge head to another.

"Some from the prairies, some from the jungle," the Grey Man answered, stroking Nancy's hand as if it were some little bird that he feared might fly away. "The Lion on whose coat you are standing now lived on the borders of the desert. In spite of his great age, he was a splendid beast, and the natives in the scattered villages around his lair had lived in dread of him for months. For now he was old, and couldn't run as fast as he used to do, he did not hunt, but skulked round the Arabs' tents at dusk to carry off feeble women and little children, since these couldn't escape him so easily as the prey he once chased in the thicket.

"A friend and I, who were after big game, happened to pass that way when he had just pounced upon some poor woman who had forgotten to fill her water vessels, and had gone to the well by night. The Arabs were greatly troubled, for the fame of that Lion was very great. And their Chief asked us to help him kill him, that his people might dwell in peace.

THE GREY MAN'S DEN

"So the Chief and a few of his men, and my friend and I, hid ourselves at dusk by the margin of a stream, with our guns loaded. Perhaps the Lion guessed there was danger near, for though we watched all through that night and the next, there was no sign of him. But on the third night, when some of us were dropping off to sleep, we heard a sudden crackling of the bushes, and there, in the bright moonlight, stood a fine Lion. For a moment he stretched himself on the ground, seeming lost in surprise that we should dare to face him; then, his great eyes flashing like balls of fire, he crouched, getting ready to spring."

"Weren't you frightened?" asked Val, coming very close, that he might not lose a word.

"There wasn't time," said the Grey Man; "that Lion was in a hurry! He made a short rush, and leapt through the air; and the Chief and I fired together. The great beast fell with a thundering roar, and, though we both sprung aside, one terrible claw just caught my thigh, leaving a wound which did not heal for a very long time.

"His mate, who was almost as fierce as he, hovered round that village for weeks, raiding the cattle, and killing twice as much as she could eat. She was shot at last by a band of native hunters, as she lay in wait beside a cattle shed. And the Arabs made a feast, and held great rejoicings. For now they knew their women and children would be safe."

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

“Tell us another Lion story!” entreated Val, when the Grey Man came to an end.

“Then it shall be one that I heard from the Arabs,” said their new friend, smiling down at Nancy, whose eyes had grown very large indeed. “It is told by them as being ‘quite true,’ and I should not be surprised if it were. For the Arabs are a brave race, you know, and the Lion in this story would not be the first wild beast to be conquered by the courage of an unarmed man. But I will begin at the beginning.”

CHAPTER II

MORE LION STORIES

HIGH up on the side of a rugged mountain an Arab had pitched his tent, and here he dwelt in peace and safety with his wife and little ones. He was a herdsman, and had need to be very watchful as he tended his flocks, since many enemies prowled near; but, as he would have told you, 'Allah befriended him,' and all that he did prospered.

"At last it happened that he had to go on a journey to a far country; and his wife and children were full of fear lest he might not return to them. But all went well with him on his travels, and he was nearly home again before he found himself in peril.

"The last stage of his journey took longer than he thought, and dusk was falling as he reached the forest which lay between him and his home. It was the lurking place, he knew, of many Lions, who, when twilight came, left their lairs to prowl through the shades in search of food.

"There wasn't a sound in the great forest, except the shrill cries of the night birds, as he hurried along a narrow path that had been cut through the dense

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

undergrowth. But this did not mean that no Lions were near; for Lions seldom roar when they seek their prey unless they are trying to scare horses or cattle which are tied up near a fire. When a Lion has this in his mind, it is said that he puts his head close to the ground, and that as he roars the earth vibrates with the dreadful noise he makes. Then the terrified creatures listening to him strain at their halters till they break, and often, in the darkness of the night, run straight into his hungry jaws.

"The Arab knew he would be safe if once he could leave the forest behind him, for beyond the trees lay an open stretch of ground, which Lions seldom ventured to cross. And since his religion taught him that it was wrong to be afraid, he sang to himself as he tramped on, thinking how glad his children would be to see him when at last he was home again. The moonlit path seemed long that night, but he was half-way through the forest when he heard a low deep growl—it's all right, Nancy! He wasn't killed!—and in front of him, filling the narrow way, lay what looked like a huge black shadow.

"It was a monstrous Lion; and unless he turned, when the creature would surely spring upon him at once, he must face him and drive him out of his way! There was only a second for him to decide what he would do, but he was a brave man.

"'How now?' he cried in ringing tones, as he walked straight up to his enemy. 'Get out of my



Lioness

MORE LION STORIES

way, you ungainly beast! How dare you lie in my path?’

“The Lion was so surprised at this that he backed a few paces, and then lay down again. The Arab grew bolder still.

“‘Be off!’ he cried as he reached him once more, ‘or I shall smite you with my stick!’

“He brandished it as he spoke about the Lion’s nose, and the great animal, who could have slain him almost as readily as a cat does a mouse, slunk off abashed, mightily afraid of this puny creature who did not fear him.”

“And he got home quite safe to his children?” asked Nancy eagerly.

“He got home quite safe. And so, no doubt, did the Lion. I expect his little ones were delighted to see him too, for Lions are very good parents. Instead of going off by themselves when their cubs are born, as many wild fathers do, Lions stay with their mates, and share with them the labour of bringing their little ones food. When these are big enough, they train them to hunt, and the cubs share their dens until they are three years old. A Lion is not fully grown until he is six, but when he is three his mane begins to appear. The rest of the Cat Tribe, to which the Lion belongs, have, as a rule, only thick short fur, which grows longer when they live in cold countries, in order to keep them warm.”

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"I'd like to hear a story about a baby Lion," said Nancy. And the Grey Man lifted her up on the couch beside him.

"We had one once belonging to the Regiment," he said. "The little chap's mother was quite a young Lioness, and they say she looked a noble beast as she came out of her rocky lair and stood before them at bay. One cub died with her, but they spared the second—a fat little beast about the size of a big cat, with the yellowest eyes I ever saw.

"We called him 'Honeypots,' not only on that account, but because though when we had him first we could still see the spots young Lions are born with showing underneath his goldeny brown fur, he was very much the colour of honey. It is thought, you must know, that once upon a time all Lions lived in the desert, since Nature has given them coats which scarcely show against the sand. This makes it very difficult to see a Lion when he's close to the ground, and so he can more easily escape his foes.

"Honeypots was fed for a time out of a baby's bottle, and he cried when somebody didn't nurse him. He was everyone's pet, and as frolicsome as a kitten. You never knew what he would do next, and he was always extremely clever in getting his own way.

"One night we couldn't find him anywhere. It had turned rather cold, and Honeypots wasn't warm enough in his basket. So he had calmly strolled

MORE LION STORIES

round to the officers' quarters, pushed open one of the sleeping tents, and snugly tucked himself into the Captain's bed. We found him with his head under the pillow, so fast asleep that we had to shake him to wake him up.

"Before long he grew too strong for a playfellow. Once, I remember, when one of the men was romping with him, out of pure fun Honeypots jumped up against his shoulder, striking him with his forepaw. The man went down as if he had been shot, for even a very young Lion can strike a heavy blow. The forearm of a full-grown Lion is one of the strongest things in the world; the bone in it is as hard as iron, and the enormous muscles that work it are as tough as steel.

"After this, no one cared to play with Honeypots, much to his disappointment. And when the regiment left Africa, he was handed over to a menagerie, where up to some years ago he was living still.

"One of our subs., long after, went to see him in the Gardens. He said his mane was grand, but that except for this, and a thicker brush of hair at the end of his tail, he looked just the very same, only bigger. There's a funny little 'thorn,' or horny point, in the middle of a Lion's tail brush, by the way, which is very curious. 'What's it for?' Well, no one can say.

"'Did Honeypots know his friend?' Of course he did! Lions have excellent memories. When his

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

visitor appeared outside his cage, Honeypots ran up and down by the bars, rubbing his head against them, and making the funniest little noises, between growls and squeals, by way of welcome. That sub. of mine wanted to go inside to him, but the keeper wouldn't allow it. I think it would have been quite safe, for Lions are very gentle with those they love, and can usually be depended upon.

"Sometimes they strike up very strange friendships, more particularly when they are in captivity. An old and feeble Lioness, the mother of fifty cubs, was greatly tormented by rats, who infested her cage and nibbled her toes. Nothing could keep them out, until at last her keeper thought of putting a spry little Terrier, a first-rate ratter, to keep her company.

"The Lioness had grown very surly, and the way she growled when the Terrier was bundled in was enough to scare any small dog. This one retired warily to a far corner, where he was beyond her reach, since she could scarcely move. And here he sat, till a couple of rats popped out of their holes and began to bite one of the Lioness' forepaws. He was on them, quick as a flash, killing first one, and then the other, in a most masterly way.

"Then the Lioness, fierce and savage as she was, knew that she had found a friend. The poor creature coaxed the Terrier to come to her with the soft little cries she had used, long ago, to talk to her cubs; and when he came, she folded her great paws around



Lioness

MORE LION STORIES

him, as gently as could be. He lived in her cage until she died, waging war on the rats so that none dare appear. It was touching to see the old Lioness trying to show how grateful she was to him.

“There’s another story, and quite a true one, of a Lion’s gratitude. A trainer, who was always kind to his animals, was persuaded to add six full-grown Lions, trained by another man, to his performing troupe. When their new master entered the arena, he chanced to slip on some damp sawdust, and, as he fell, one of the strange Lions rushed on him with a ferocious growl. The rest of the newcomers joined him, and the trainer would have been torn to pieces if the strongest and biggest of his own Lions had not sprung to the rescue. The great beast drove off all his assailants but the first; this had fixed his teeth in the trainer’s thigh; but the man was able at last to kill him with a blow from the iron crowbar which an assistant had pushed to him through the gate. The man was at last dragged away into safety, and in spite of what anyone said to the contrary, he always believed that it was to protect him, and nothing else, that his own Lion played the part he did.”

“I should like to see a Lion most awf’lly!” said Val. “Not close, you know, but p’raps on the other side of the road.”

“He might cross over,” laughed the Grey Man, “and then you wouldn’t like it at all! Long, long ago, when England, as we call it now, wasn’t an

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

island, but was joined on to other countries, with no sea between, Lions most likely roamed in the woods round here. In many parts of the British Islands their bones have been discovered buried deep down in the earth, where they must have lain for thousands and thousands of years. There were Sabre-toothed Tigers, too, in those days, and great Cave Bears, and other strange creatures that would scare the two of you into fits! Africa is the principal home of the Lion to-day, for he's growing very scarce in India, and in Persia too, though he's found there still."

"Why—" Val began; but before he had time to ask another question, the butler came in with a steaming silver urn, followed by a footman carrying a big tray. In the centre of this was a Christmas cake, with a piece of holly stuck in the middle. The housekeeper, kind old soul, had sent it up from the servants' hall for her master's little visitors.

"Now we'll have tea!" said the Grey Man cheerfully, but when Val looked at Nancy, she shook her head. So Val turned his back on that fascinating cake, and squared his small shoulders manfully.

"Your tea looks ever so nice," he said, "and we'd love to stay. But I don't think Mother would like us to, unless we'd asked Grandmother first."

"She'd say it wasn't polite, you know," Nancy added shyly. And the Grey Man did not try to press them.

MORE LION STORIES

"Then you shall come to-morrow instead," he said. "I'll send a note to your Grandmother this evening, to ask her to lend you to me for the afternoon. I shall expect you soon after lunch."

"And you'll tell us about all the animals?" urged Val, who had loved his Noah's Ark even better than soldiers, and meant to discover 'a lot of new beasts' when he grew up.

"Not 'all,' old fellow, for that would take me the rest of my life, and even then it couldn't be done. But I'll tell you what I can remember of a hundred or so of the best known, if you are not tired out long before I come to the end."

"No chance of that!" cried Val, with another long look at the trophies on walls and floor. As he raced Nancy home to tea he roared so fiercely that she was quite glad to be safe indoors, for Lions seemed to glare at her through the bushes. And while he made his grandmother smile by chattering about 'best animals,' and of all the wonders of their new friend's study, Nancy was thinking of the Grey Man himself—how lonesome he must be with no one to talk to, and how pleased he had been to see them.

CHAPTER III

THE LION'S FIRST COUSIN

THE twins arrived quite early next afternoon, but the Grey Man was on the lookout for them. They waved to him through the bars of the gates, while they waited for these to open, and Val had not been two minutes in the room before inquiring if he had ever met a Tiger.

"I should think I had!" said the Grey Man, rather grimly, "and a terrible beast he is. His strength is enormous, and sometimes he's even bigger than a Lion, whose nearest relation he's supposed to be. The principal difference between them is in their colouring, though the Tiger, of course, has no sign of a mane, and his head is differently shaped. He is longer in the body, too, in proportion to his limbs, for these are shorter than the Lion's; and his tail, which tapers off to a point, hasn't a brush at the end of it."

"I've often wondered," remarked Val, "why a Tiger has stripes when a Lion hasn't?"

"Well, as I told you yesterday, it's thought that when Lions first lived in the world they all made their homes in the deserts, where their coats are



Tiger

THE LION'S FIRST COUSIN

almost the same colour as the sand. But Tigers, clever people say, must always have belonged to the jungle, for the great dark stripes of their tawny fur blend so well with the withered blades of the tall grass in which they hide that in their native haunts they are almost invisible, even to a trained eye. Hunters have often no idea that a Tiger is near them until they hear his barking growl, or the peculiar '*woof!*' he gives when surprised. And when he lurks among the clefts of rocks, his stripes blend with these, too.

"There are four great races of Tigers known, and each has different markings. The Bengal Tiger is perhaps the most famous; he's a wonderfully handsome fellow, and very fierce. The Manchurian Tiger, who often prowls amidst the snows, has much more white about him, and in the winter his coat grows thick and woolly to protect him from the biting cold. The Persian Tiger and the Malay Tiger are somewhat smaller, but just as fierce."

"What does a Tiger eat?" asked Val.

"Any wild animal that he can kill, according to the country in which he lives; and Tigers range over most parts of Asia and its islands. In the jungle a Tiger preys on Deer and Antelopes, and destroys any number of Wild Pigs; though a full-grown Boar, with his great tusks, is often a match for him. He's also very partial to Monkeys and Pea Fowl, or even Porcupines, and he has been known to kill and eat a

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

tender young Elephant by way of a change. On the plains he often attacks the Buffalo, which defends himself so bravely that he sometimes succeeds in putting Mr Tiger to flight.

“As a cattle-stealer the Tiger is both feared and hated, for if he can get them he will eat as many as two fat Cows a week, and can bring down a huge Bullock by fixing his teeth in the nape of his neck, and dislocating his backbone. So strong is he, that when the Bullock is dead he will drag him nearly a quarter of a mile, if need be, to find a spot he considers sheltered enough before devouring him. A smaller animal, such as a Cow or a Deer, he will carry off in his mouth.

“It is the cattle-stealing Tiger—or rather, Tigress, for she is a much more general offender than her mate—who becomes a man-eater, since having grown used to the sight of man, she loses the fear of him which is natural to most wild beasts. As a rule no Tiger flies at a man unless he is being hunted, or is suddenly surprised; and though he learns to scorn a native, the Indian Tiger almost always flies at the sight of an armed man.

“When a Tiger has eaten until he can eat no more, and there's still some of his ‘kill’ left, he goes into cover as close to it as he can, so that he may drive away any daring Jackal who ventures near to steal it. Sometimes, however, when he wants to sleep in peace, he buries the remains of his meal

THE LION'S FIRST COUSIN

under leaves and grass, or hides it beneath a bush. And when he feels he can eat again, he comes back to finish it up. Hunters often take advantage of this, and set their traps beside his half-finished victim."

Val had been wandering round the room, and now he came to a standstill in front of the head of the big Tiger which had first attracted his attention. The Grey Man raised himself on his elbow, and his thin face flushed.

"That fellow nearly did for me," he said. "Like the Lion I was telling you about a while ago, he was a noted man-eater, and the natives would not have slain him even if they could, for they believed that his body was the home of an evil spirit even more to be feared than he. This Tiger, like most of his kind, had a certain beat, or 'pitch,' beyond which he seldom strayed; and within a circle of twenty miles he was said to have killed and eaten no less than eighty men in one year!

"There are several ways of hunting Tigers. Sometimes pitfalls are dug, quite twenty feet deep, and only just large enough at the top for the Tiger to fall through. Sharp spikes are fixed at the bottom of the pit, which is much wider, and then ferns and long grasses are laid across the top, so that no one would guess that a trap had been set.

"Presently the Tiger comes along. His keen sense of smell tells him that men have been in that neigh-

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

bourhood, and those flaming eyes of his, which, like those of all the Cat Tribe, are specially formed so as to take in every spink of light there is, glance to this side and that in the dusk. The grass scarcely stirs as he glides along, though the wood-things know he is near. Suddenly, he feels the ground give way beneath his feet, and before he has time for more than one frantic growl, he has tumbled into the pit. Hearing his cries, the natives waiting in ambush hasten to put an end to him, and his head and skin are carried home with great rejoicings.

“But the Tiger I was telling you about was much too cunning to be trapped in this way, and night after night claimed toll from the trembling natives. Jim Keith and I, who were hunting big game in another province, heard strange reports of this fearful beast that the trembling Indians called ‘The Terror,’ and, instead of joining some friends at a distance, we turned back to have a look at him. We were both good shots, and we’d made up our minds that ‘The Terror’ should kill no more frightened women as they went to the stream for water.

“At first we meant to go after him on foot, following his trail right into the jungle. But when it came to the time to start, our beaters refused point blank to come with us. Beaters, my boy, are men who beat the bushes so as to enrage the Tiger, who dislikes noise, and to induce him to come out into the open, where it is easier to shoot him.

THE LION'S FIRST COUSIN

"No Elephants were to be had in that district, or we could have ridden into the thicket on one of these, and fired at the Tiger from the comparative safety of a 'howdah' on the great brute's back. While we were settling what we would do, the man-eater claimed a fresh victim, so we determined not to wait another night, but to try our luck at once.

"It was with great difficulty that we managed to persuade the natives, who were quite certain we should be killed, and didn't believe us when we said that this was what was going to happen to the Tiger, to make a platform of poles fastened together and covered with twigs, across the fork of a tall tree. We knew by his footprints that 'The Terror' often passed this way to the natives' huts. We tethered a goat near by to tempt him, for he sometimes ate cattle as well as men. And when it grew dusk we climbed to the platform by a light ladder, and seated ourselves to wait.

"The hours passed slowly, for the Tiger didn't come, and we knew from the stillness of the jungle that he was nowhere near. Even when they're asleep the Monkeys seem to know if this dreaded enemy of theirs is on the warpath, and some of them are sure to wake and follow him, keeping high up in the boughs, with cries of rage and terror.

"Just before dawn we heard a little animal called the Muntjac, or Barking Deer, give what the Hindus describe as his 'Take-care cry.' It rang out sharply,

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

and was echoed by another Muntjac close at hand. We had only time to lift our rifles when a low deep growl from a bush some few yards away told us that 'The Terror' had come at last."

"What happened next?" inquired Val eagerly. The Grey Man had stopped to smile at Nancy, who had drawn very near him, and looked rather troubled. She wasn't sure that she liked this story, though Val thought it best of all.

"Well, just as the Tiger bounded into view, his lips drawn back in an ugly snarl, our platform in the tree gave way, and down we fell almost on his head! He was over me in an instant, with my right shoulder gripped by his teeth. I knew if I moved I should be torn to pieces, but it was hard to lie still. However, I did; and before the brute had time to maul me, Keith, though terribly bruised and shaken by his fall, crept close up to us on his hands and knees, and shot him through the brain. He died that instant, and though my arm was never quite the same, I had had a most marvellous escape."

"Tigers are almost as bad as Lions!" said Nancy solemnly.

"There's something fine about them, for all their fierceness," said the Grey Man thoughtfully, "and a Tigress will brave any danger for her young. A man I once knew told me that he should never forget an experience he had when he first went Tiger-hunting in India.

THE LION'S FIRST COUSIN

"They were coming home one evening after a hard day's sport, their beaters laden with the skin and head of a splendidly marked Tigress, when they heard a queer little sound between a mew and a growl, and peering inquisitively at them from a bush, was the prettiest Tiger kitten. It couldn't have been more than a few weeks old, and to leave the little creature behind to starve was not to be thought of. So the youngest of the party picked it up and carried it home, snuggled under his coat.

"His friends were amused at the fuss he made of it, for he fed it as carefully as if it were a baby, and took possession of the nicest dog-collar in the camp. A fairly stout chain was attached to this, and "Kitty," as he called his pet, was fastened to the tent pole. It frisked about quite happily, and seemed to enjoy so much attention.

"About two hours later, when they were just thinking of turning in, the men in the tent who had been watching its antics heard the roar of a Tiger close at hand. At the first sound of this, the kitten left off playing, answering the roar with excited cries, and straining at its chain to get free. Before anyone had time to think, a magnificent Tigress bounded in, seized the kitten in her mouth and jerked the chain, which snapped like a piece of cotton. In another second she had dashed away, leaving the men too astonished to lift a gun, even if they had felt inclined. Wasn't she a brave mother? She must have tracked

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

her little one by its scent, and faced the glow of the camp fires that she might rescue it.

“Tigers usually fight shy of coming where men are gathered together, but sometimes they become so reckless in chasing their prey that they go on and on, till they find themselves surrounded by frightened faces! This happened, I know, three times on a plain in mid-China, quite close to a great city. Two Tigers were killed before they had time to hurt anyone; each time the brute appeared he seemed to spring from nowhere, and for a long while afterwards the natives went in mortal dread.

“The third time a Tiger galloped down from the hills at dusk, chasing a Deer, which must have escaped him in the end. Feeling thirsty after his run, he went to quench his thirst at a river, no doubt in a very bad temper over his fruitless run. A Chinaman had been feeding his ducks from a little skiff, and his friends believe that on seeing what he thought to be a big cow drinking greedily at the stream, he gave the beast a poke with the pole he carried. At any rate, the Tiger sprang at the poor man and killed him, and the villagers, roused by his last cry, were panic stricken with fear.

“All that night, I expect, they burned watch fires, and stayed awake, afraid that at any moment the Tiger might claim another victim. Someone must catch him, for until he was slain they were none of them safe; but when it came to the question as to

THE LION'S FIRST COUSIN

who should go out to look for him, they were all too frightened.

“So at break of day the Mandarins of the city, which was only a few miles distant, were implored to help them. The Mandarins put their heads together, and after thinking a little and talking a lot, they sent the Commander-in-Chief of their army with a number of soldiers and two big guns. The Tiger was still lurking on the outskirts of the village, for he had greatly enjoyed that Chinaman, and when once a Tiger has tasted a man, he wants to taste another.

“The soldiers soon found his hiding place, and formed a wide ring round it. Then they shouted, and yelled, and clapped their hands, knowing that a Tiger hates loud noises, which make him very angry. At last he rushed out to drive them away, furious with rage that they should so disturb him. He was a gallant beast, for in spite of the blazing away of the guns he charged several times, fighting to the very end.

“When the great length of him lay quite still, the huge paws stretched out and the fierce eyes closed, the Chinamen began to dispute as to whom his body belonged. The Governor of the city from which the soldiers had been sent said that he had most right to it; but the Commander-in-Chief of the victorious army—yes, Val! It *did* ‘take a lot of men to kill one Tiger!’—declared that if anyone could claim it, this was he. ‘It is my duty as a soldier to be brave,’ he

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

said, 'and what better food can you have for courage than soup made out of a Tiger's bones? The beast is surely mine!'

"So the flesh and bones of the Tiger were given to him, while the Governor of the city had the skin.

"And did he *really* believe Tiger soup would make him brave?" asked Val, with a broad smile.

"He really did," the Grey Man answered, "and in some countries people think this still. They imagine that virtues belong to flesh and blood, instead of to that part of a man or other animal which goes away when he dies. We're 'animals,' too, Val, though we have something in us which none of the rest have—something that makes us reason, and hope, and work and pray, and lifts us ever so far above the rest. And this is why we ought to be very, very kind to every animal that claims protection; most specially so to those that serve us, or keep us company."

"Tell us about some more wild ones!" urged Val, more determined than ever to be "an explorer" some day.

So the Grey Man settled himself on the couch, and shaded his eyes as he turned to gaze into the fire.

CHAPTER IV

THREE MORE BIG CATS

IN the New World," he began, "it is the Jaguar who is known as 'King of the Beasts.' There are neither Lions nor Tigers, you know, in North and South America; but even if there were, I fancy the Jaguar would hold his own. Not only is he quite as fierce and much more active than they, but he's as much at home in the boughs of the lofty trees as he is on the ground below. No prey can escape him—not even by taking to the water, for he swims and dives like a fish. That rug beneath the second window once covered his bones. Bring it over here, Val, that Nancy may see what a beautiful coat he had."

Val lifted it carefully by the head, keeping his fingers clear of the snarling teeth; and together they looked at the handsome black rings on the rich red-gold of the tawny fur.

"It is rather like the Leopard's," the Grey Man said, "though the ground colour is paler, and he hasn't those clusters of small black spots in the centre of his dark rosettes.

"For his size, the Jaguar is certainly the strongest

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

beast in the world. He can kill a man with a single blow from one of his huge forepaws, and there is not an animal in his native land, except the Puma, which isn't at his mercy. Sometimes his coat is black as night, and the trembling Indians declare that then he's more savage still.

"You would guess at once that he belonged to the Cat Tribe if you heard him courting his mate; but his roar is a kind of fierce hoarse growl, with a choking cough at the end. It is a fearful sound to listen to in the darkness, for it is almost always mingled with the shriek of some poor creature on which he has just pounced.

"One day a famous traveller who was exploring the banks of the River Amazon met a black Jaguar face to face. He was quite alone, and carried no gun, but luckily for him the Jaguar was far too intent on some special business to do more than glare at him. The brute did not even pause in his way, but passed straight on, waving his serpent-like tail; and the traveller, much too interested to be frightened, was amazed to see how every small animal in his path scampered away in a panic of fear instead of trying to hide, as wood-things usually do when danger threatens. Birds, too, made haste to get out of his way, whizzing through the air as if shot from a catapult. For the wood-things knew that wherever they hid the Jaguar would see them; and his spring is so very sure and swift that the victim he marks

THREE MORE BIG CATS

must die. 'Does a Jaguar eat birds?' I should think so, Nancy! He moves so silently and lightly that he gives no warning of his approach, and Monkeys and Birds never know when they will be snapped up in his greedy paw. I don't suppose that any creature is so deeply dreaded as he.

"His roar, as he pounces on his prey, often comes from far aloft in a dense forest; next moment he may be on the ground, which he gains as swiftly as he leapt the boughs, and Tapirs and Deer, and the Great Ant-Eaters, and smaller animals without number, fall victims in their turn. He thinks nothing of killing an Alligator at sight, and topples fat Turtles over on their backs that he may scoop out their shells.

"Sometimes he turns his attention to fish, of which he is rather fond. Lying full length along a bough that overhangs the river, he prepares to enjoy himself. Whenever excited, the Jaguar waves his tail, and the tip splashes down on the water, making a sound as of falling fruit. Then the fruit-eating fish that inhabit those regions think that they're going to have a meal, and dart eagerly up to the surface. Down comes that long cruel paw of his, and the fish is seized and swallowed.

"But what the Jaguar seems to like best is the American Wild Pig, or Peccary. When we talk of 'pigs,' we usually think of harmless creatures that grunt and eat, and give us bacon for breakfast. But

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

Wild Pigs are very different creatures, and a herd of Peccaries bids even a Jaguar beware. So the wily creature follows them a good way off, keeping out of sight. He does this by instinct on all occasions; for a Jaguar hates to be seen. The moment a Peccary lingers behind, perhaps to eat some specially tempting morsel he has spied out for himself, the Jaguar pounces out and kills him, and then makes tracks for a tree. Once up in the branches, he is safe from the avengers, who are certain to return when they miss their comrade. There the Jaguar remains, sometimes for hours, until they grow tired of rushing round and round the tree, and telling him what they think of him. When the last has gone, he drops lightly down, and enjoys the Peccary he has killed at leisure."

"Isn't he ever caught?" asked Val.

"Sometimes," the Grey Man answered, "though less often than you might suppose. A party of Englishmen, who were camping out near a river in South America, were disturbed one night by extraordinary noises from the forest, which they guessed must come from a herd of angry Peccaries. Being short of food, they took their guns to see if they could shoot one.

"In an open space, flooded by brilliant moonlight, they saw a Jaguar standing at bay, on an Ant Hill some five feet high. He was surrounded by a crowd of these Wild Pigs, who snarled viciously as they

THREE MORE BIG CATS

tried to get to him, and seemed almost beside themselves with rage. Evidently anxious to see what had happened to the lagger-behind, they had come back sooner than the Jaguar had expected, and before he had time to reach a tree.

“The Englishmen thought it wisest not to go too near, lest the Peccaries might attack them instead, and keeping well in the shadow, they watched what was going on. The Jaguar looked round him desperately; he was barely beyond his enemies’ reach, and every moment their leaps grew higher. In his despair he drooped his tail; the Peccaries seized him by it, and dragged him down. And though he killed six of them before he was done for, this time they made a meal of him.”

Nancy drew a deep breath. She was almost sorry for ‘the poor Jaguar,’ though Val declared he deserved his fate.

“It’s so mean,” he said, “to steal up behind, and pounce on a Pig that’s all by itself! And I think those Peccaries are jolly little brutes to stand by each other like that.”

“So they are, Val,” the Grey Man answered. “But, all the same, I understand what Nancy means. The Jaguar was one among many at the last, you know; that’s why she pities him. Move your chair a bit to the right, old fellow. I want to show you a Leopard skin.”

The heavy oak chair—it had goblins’ heads carved

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

on each wide arm, and was very grand to sit in—took both twins to stir it, and Nancy panted a little as she went back to the Grey's Man's couch.

"I'm sorry I couldn't move it for you," he said. And as he spoke it came into Val's head how hard it must be for someone so big and strong to lie still while other people did things. But perhaps the Grey Man didn't mind now, he thought, for he wasn't a bit sad as he talked about the Leopard skin that the big chair had partly hidden.

"It has the same dark rosettes as the Jaguar's, you'll notice," he was saying in his kind deep voice. "But the Leopard's has no little spots inside the rings, and the ground colour of his coat is not so rich, as I told you a while ago. Still, he is quite a handsome beast, and as graceful as he is strong.

"Leopards are common to Africa and India, and though most of them have these dark rosettes, there are pure black Leopards, and even white ones; the last being extremely rare. The spots, or rosettes, on an African Leopard's skin are smaller and closer than those on that of the Indian Leopard, while the Manchurian Leopard, a big fierce creature with a shaggy coat, has very large rosettes indeed. The rough-haired Leopard of Persia boasts a long bushy tail, and there are slight variations in fur and colouring in the coats of Leopards in different countries. There are ever so many Leopards, Val, and while some are only about five feet long from the tip

THREE MORE BIG CATS

of their tails to the tips of their noses, others are larger than this.

“But even a small Leopard is not to be despised, for every inch of him is full of strength, and he is much more ready to attack a man than either the Lion or Tiger. He can climb splendidly, which they can't do, though the Tiger sometimes manages to spring up on a low branch. In Africa a Leopard is as much at home in the trees as the Jaguar is in America, and when he has killed more than he can eat, he leaves his food in the fork of some high bough, since here the prowling Hyenas cannot get at it.”

“Mustn't they wish they could climb, too!” Val chuckled. And the Grey Man stopped to smile and nod.

“The Leopard sleeps the best part of the day,” he went on presently, “waking to hunt, like other big cats, at the approach of night. Under cover of the darkness he wends his way down from the rocky hills with a series of wonderful bounds and springs, and woe be to that one of a herd of cattle in the valley who lags behind the rest! When living far from the haunts of men Leopards prey upon Monkeys and other small animals of the wilds, but the food they love best of all is Dog.

“A Leopard will do anything to obtain this, and hunts the neighbourhood of villages with the utmost impudence, scrambling up on the roofs of the huts at dusk, or jumping over walls, quite reckless as to what he may encounter. If he can't get a dog, he'll

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

make shift with a cow or sheep, a pony or donkey. Nothing he can pounce upon comes amiss; and if he meets his victim's owner, he flies at him, tooth and nail. He kills Sambar deer and even bullocks by strangling them or breaking their backs. In rushing upon an enemy, he gives a short hoarse roar, but as a rule he is very silent. The Lion, I should say, is the noisiest of the Cats.

"There's another big fellow, known as the 'Lion' of Central and South America, and the 'Mountain Lion,' or 'Panther' of the North, who I'm sure will interest you. He's a beast you might be fond of, Nancy, for with all his fierceness to his quarry, and the dogs that hunters set on him, he is so gentle always to mankind that the wandering horsemen of the Plains call him 'the friend of Christians.' The name by which we know him is the Puma, and, next to the Jaguar, he is the largest animal in America.

"A Puma has neither spots nor strips when grown, but his young ones have blackish spots sprinkled over their close brown coats. These spots fade away in time, being only just visible when they are six months old. Puma cubs are born blind, like kittens, and at first are only about ten inches long."

"Don't Pumas *ever* kill people?" inquired Nancy, inclined to think that they were by far the nicest of all the big Cats.

"So seldom," said the Grey Man, "that I might

THREE MORE BIG CATS

almost answer 'never.' And though one will sometimes kill as many as twenty dogs before at last he is killed himself, he allows the hunter to do just as he likes, meekly taking the blows of a stout cudgel while making ready for the next onslaught of a yelping cur. The sight of a pack of hounds will always rouse him to fury, but he has not the faintest dislike to us, and in the only instance I know of in which he attacked a human being, the man was wearing a big yellow cloak which was the exact colour of the Llama that the animal had been hunting. In the dusk the Puma was deceived, and had badly injured the poor man before he discovered his mistake.

"A traveller on the plains who had lost his way, and could only find a rock to shelter him as night came on; was disturbed when dropping off to sleep by the appearance of four Pumas, the father and mother, and two cubs. He knew they wouldn't hurt him, so he didn't move; and after they had sniffed at him a little, they began to play hide-and-seek in the rocks, enjoying the game just as much as you would, and frequently jumping over him as they chased each other. He watched them by the light of the stars until past midnight, when they left him as suddenly as they had come."

Nancy's forehead was very puckered, and her eyes had an angry little spark in them.

"I think it's ever so wicked," she cried, "for men

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

to hurt Pumas when they don't hurt us! Why should they set their dogs upon them?"

"It's this way, you see," the Grey Man said gently. "The Puma, for all his meekness to Man, is extremely fierce where his natural prey are concerned, and has an enormous appetite. And while the Jaguar loves to eat Peccaries, and the Leopard, Dogs, the Puma has a particular liking for Horses, killing off these in such large numbers that if he were allowed to go unmolested, it would be impossible to breed them anywhere near his haunts. Men must protect their property, you see, and an animal that kills twice as much as he can eat, and will actually spring on a colt that's in the midst of a drove, with the driver standing close beside it, is a very dangerous neighbour. It isn't easy to catch a Puma, for he can leap to a great height, and climb as readily as the Jaguar. Sometimes he takes a fancy to feed on porcupines, and you've no idea how funny he looks with the quills sticking round his lips. I once—why, Nancy! What's the matter?"

Nancy had given a sudden sharp cry, and now was holding her arm very tight.

"A needle has pricked me, and O! such a sharp one!" she said, with quivering lips.

CHAPTER V

CAT COUSINS

BUT it wasn't "a needle" that had scratched Nancy—only the claws of an angry cat who had been asleep beneath the cushion on which she had just then leaned.

"I had no idea Milady was there!" said the Grey Man, much concerned. "You must forgive her, Nancy, for she isn't used to being disturbed. I expect I spoil her, for until you came she was all I had to keep me company."

Milady had sprung to his shoulder, where she waved her feathery tail from side to side, looking very astonished and very indignant. The Grey Man put up his hand and caught her against his breast, where he held her until she purred with pleasure and pushed her head under his chin.

"Now make friends!" he said, as Nancy ventured to stroke her. Milady accepted this as an apology, and stretched herself over the Grey Man's knees until two soft paws lay in Nancy's lap.

"She's very like a little Tiger!" cried Val admiringly.

"Indeed she is," her master replied. "If we could

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

make her grow larger and larger, as Alice-in-Wonderland did, she would soon look so like one of her grand cousins that you would scarcely know them apart."

Milady yawned at this, showing the greater part of her pretty pink tongue; the Grey Man made Nancy touch it, to feel how rough it was.

"Both big and little Cats," he said, "have these rough tongues, which make it easy for them to strip meat off bones, as you will see a Cat does if you watch her eat. Other creatures who belong with her to the great family of Flesh-eaters, such as those of the Dog Tribe—Wolves, Jackals, and Foxes—have quite smooth tongues, but to make up for this, Nature has given them teeth which are specially fitted for cracking bones. They swallow these, meat and all, when they have scrunched them up quite small."

"What makes the Cats' tongues rough?" asked Val, stroking Milady rather gingerly, for she had just unsheathed her claws.

"Tongues have a great many nerves on their surface, you know, which is why they 'feel' things more quickly than even our finger tips, which are also very sensitive. Well, in the tongues of the Cats, each little nerve and blood-vessel ends in what you could call a tiny lump. These all point backward, toward the throat, and make Milady's tongue as rough as a rasp. The enlarged ends of the nerves and blood-

CAT COUSINS

vessels in the great Cats' tongues are like sharp points of horn.

"A baby Lion—I'm talking of Honeypots—once licked my hand, by way of showing his affection for me, and it nearly took the skin off! He lapped up milk just as Milady does, curling his tongue at the edges to make a little cup or spoon. He had whiskers like hers, too; all the Cat Tribe find whiskers very useful.

"What for?" asked Val, trying to tickle Milady's. She sneezed indignantly, and tucked away her head under Nancy's arm.

"At the root of each bristly hair," the Grey Man told him, "there is a very delicate little nerve, which sends a message to the animal's brain directly the hair it belongs to touches anything. So if the Cat, either big or little, is hunting in the dark, and even with those wonderful eyes of hers, which are formed so as to take in every twinkle of light there is, cannot see the size of some hole or crevice she wants to creep through, her whiskers, by touching the sides of it, warn her at once if it is too narrow for her to pass. When Lions and Tigers and other big Cats stalk their prey through the jungle, their eyes are usually fixed upon their victims, and then their whiskers act as extra eyes, telling them at once if some tree stump or overhanging bough is in their way."

"I'd like to know what 'stalking' means," said Val.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"It means creeping after your game very softly and quietly, so that you may not be seen until you spring upon it. All the Cat Tribe hunt in this way. Look out of the window, and you'll see Black Tom trying to stalk a sparrow this very moment!"

The Grey Man was right. Across the snow-covered lawn stole a huge black Cat, his tail, held high in the air, twisting this way and that at the tip like a wriggling snake. He kept as close as he could to the rose beds, and his greedy eyes were fixed on a small brown sparrow on the lowest step of the balcony.

"Don't be anxious, Nancy!" cried the Grey Man, as her blue eyes clouded. "That spry little sparrow is more than a match for Black Tom, and the step is a favourite perch of his. I almost believe that he sits there just to tantalize his enemy! He knows the very moment to fly off!"

And so it seemed, for no sooner had Black Tom come within springing distance, than the "spry little sparrow" fluttered away, with a series of chirps which sounded like bird laughter. Black Tom slunk back to the stables, with his head drooping, and Nancy sighed with relief.

"If you were near enough to see the marks of his 'spoor,' or footprints, distinctly," remarked the Grey Man, "you would find no sign of his claws, but only of the elastic pads which help him to walk so softly. The footprints of all the Cat Tribe



Lynx



Lynx

CAT COUSINS

are the same, for since Cats must keep their claws very sharp to help them destroy their prey, these are always 'retracted,' or drawn back, into the cushions with which each toe is provided until they want to use them. The Cats have a larger cushion in the middle of each foot; look at Milady's, Nancy—would you ever think she could scratch? The Cats uncover their claws when they spring, and though hers are not so terrible as the great yellow horn-hooks of the Lion or Tiger, they can do a great deal of damage."

Milady purred, as if she quite agreed. Only that morning a housemaid had called her a greedy creature, and had tried to slap her when she helped herself from a dish of cream; that girl had now an ugly mark all down one side of her face! But at this moment Milady looked so very sweet that Nancy kissed the top of her nose, while the Grey Man patted her.

"She's rather a beauty, isn't she?" he said. "If she were many sizes larger, and had a tuft of hair at the tip of each ear, as she lies now she'd be rather like a Lynx that belonged to one of my orderlies. He found her in the woods when she was a baby, as that subaltern found the Tiger cub, and carried her home with him. I have often heard it said that a Lynx is quite untameable, but it was not so with 'Sharpeyes.' She would lie for hours stretched out at his feet, as Milady lies now in your lap, and follow him about like a little dog; but when the Regiment was ordered home, and she had to be left

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

behind, she would not eat, and grew so savage that they were obliged to kill her. I was awfully sorry for her, poor beast, for she had loved her master faithfully. Lynxes haven't what we call 'a sweet disposition,' for they're sullen and spiteful, even when at large, but there are always exceptions, you see."

"Where do Lynxes live?" Val hastened to inquire. He rather thought that he would like to try to tame one himself.

"Mostly in northern countries, boy. In South America, India, and Africa they are quite unknown. There are many different kinds of Lynxes, and their lovely soft coats vary in colour and thickness not only according to where you find them, but to the time of the year. With most of those we call 'true' Lynxes, the fur has often small black dots upon it during the summer, but it is only on the cubs that these spots remain during the winter. I have come across these animals in Norway and Sweden, and in Russia, as well as Canada, where their fur is red, or a sort of yellowish brown. Most of them were under three feet in length, but they kill any animal they can overpower; often, it would seem, for sheer love of killing, since they kill more than they can eat.

"The Caracal, one of the Lynx's first cousins, has quite long black ears with the same tufts of hair on the tips, but thicker and longer. He is found in Africa, and is the only one of the Lynx family in India, where he hides himself in thick grass or low

CAT COUSINS

bushes. He's smaller than a true Lynx, but bigger than the Jungle Cat—a Cat cousin who is but a little larger than Milady here. The Jungle Cat is common in India and Africa, and preys on all kinds of game. He's a savage little beggar, and has been known to spring out of a field of sugar cane and carry off a pea-fowl in front of the very nose of the sportsman who has just shot it. I have never seen him, but I've heard it said that he easily leaps six feet in the air if a bird should pass over his head flying low. This animal is readily tamed, and is sometimes trained to hunt birds for men.

“Most members of the Lynx tribe love to live in rocky places, but they haunt the forests too, and some spend much of their time in the branches of the trees, peering down through the leaves on the watch for prey. You've heard a person with very sharp eyes called 'Lynx-eyed,' haven't you? This is because it used to be thought that Lynxes saw further than other animals, though they don't, as a matter of fact. All the Cats have wonderful vision, and the eyes of most, as I think I told you, are specially fitted to 'see in the dark.'

“One of the prettiest Lynxes I ever saw was sitting at the foot of a hollow trunk of a spreading tree when I passed through the woods one bright spring morning. She had been so intent upon watching something far away that I actually surprised her, which is a rare thing to do to a Lynx; but like a flash

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

of lightning she was up in the boughs, snarling and hissing at me.

“Some hours later I went back that way, purposely treading very softly, and keeping away from the side the wind was blowing that my scent might not betray me. There was Madame Lynx still; but this time her two small cubs were with her, and all three were engaged in devouring a sheep she must have dragged a long distance.

“The faintest crackling of a twig warned her that something was near, and her shimmering yellow eyes met mine through a screen of boughs. At first, I fancy, she meant to attack me; but she soon thought better of it, when she saw that I was armed, and vanished into the hollow with her young ones. Next moment I saw them all high in the tree, the cubs clinging close to her.”

“I’m so glad you didn’t shoot her!” cried Nancy. Val said, “Why didn’t you?”

“It would have been pretty bad for those cubs if I had, don’t you think?” returned the Grey Man slowly. “But apart from that, I had come to the time when it is much more interesting to watch a wild animal than to shoot one! If I were young and strong again, I don’t think I should want to hunt at all, but just to watch animals and note their ways, and learn all I could about them.”

“When I’m big,” said Val, pressing forward earnestly, “I’m going to invent a new kind of airship,



Lynx

CAT COUSINS

and sail in it round the world. And whenever I come to a great forest, I shall ring a bell, and my airship will drop as softly and gently as a little bird. And when it's close enough to the ground, I shall climb off and slip away to the woods, to see all the animals in their dens. P'raps I shall find some you've never heard of; new kinds that aren't in any books."

"You may," said the Grey Man thoughtfully. "And wherever you go, unless to the far North, you'll be sure to come across some of the Cats. They are the most perfectly formed of all the Flesh-eaters, and as graceful as they are strong.

"You'll always know the look of a Cat, and except for the Cheetah, you'll find that every one is able to sheath his claws completely when they are not in use. Cats keep these sharp and clean by 'clawing' the bark of trees; I often notice Milady do this when she takes a stroll in the garden. In the jungle the marks of Tigers' claws may be seen high up on the trunks, the great beasts having evidently raised themselves on their hind legs to reach as far as they could.

"While we are talking about the Cats, I mustn't forget to tell you of the Cheetah, or 'Hunting Leopard,' as he is called; for there are several specially interesting things about him. One is, that so far as we know he's the only one of the Cat Tribe whose claws can't be quite drawn back when he's not using them. His teeth are different

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

from the other Cats' teeth, too, and he's much slenderer, with longer legs for his size than even the Lynx. On account of his teeth and claws, and certain of his muscles, which are like a dog's, some people say he is 'three quarters cat and one quarter dog.'

"'Where does he live?' All over Africa and India, in rocky jungles when he can find them, or in hollow trees. Sometimes the Lion hunts with his mate, but this is an exception to the general rule of the Cats to hunt alone. The Cheetah is the only other exception. He and his mate always hunt in couples, rushing at their prey at the same moment when they get near enough to strike it. No animal in the world, it's said, can run so fast as a Hunting Leopard for some five hundred yards, so you'll guess that Antelopes, fleet as they are themselves, have not much chance against them.

"In India they are often tamed, and trained to hunt Blackbuck for their masters. Sometimes the natives lead them to the hunting field on a leash, or they are carried there in open carts, their heads in hoods. These hoods are lifted when the Buck comes in sight, and the Hunting Leopard springs lightly from the cart and stalks his victim as a Cat does. Once near enough, he breaks into a swift gallop, pinning the poor Buck by the throat before it can escape him."

Nancy was rather glad to hear just now the

CAT COUSINS

clinking of cups and saucers. Milady heard it too, and stared severely at her master.

“Don’t you forget,” her look seemed to say, “that cream’s for ME!”

The Grey Man had certainly spoilt her.

CHAPTER VI

THE DOG TRIBE

SOMETHING lovely" had happened to the twins before they saw the Grey Man again. A little, fat, round dumpling of a puppy, with a black spot over one eye and the most engaging way of wagging his bit of a dark brown tail, had appeared one morning at the breakfast table with "For Nancy and Val, from Mother," on the label that hung from his red leather collar.

They had always longed for 'a dog of their very own,' and 'Billy,' as they christened him straight away, was to be their Christmas present.

Billy took everyone's heart by storm. Even Grandmother Blake, who thought that dogs were best in the stable, allowed him to sit on the rustling folds of her grey silk gown. He didn't ask permission, but just rolled on, and curled himself up as if he belonged there. And Grandmother Blake was distinctly pleased.

"He's a nice little dog," she said.

"Ten times as nice as any new baby," Val declared, as he tried to teach him to balance a lump of sugar on the tip of his nose. Billy thought this a

THE DOG TRIBE

silly trick, and said so, by tossing it off and scrunching it up in his beautifully sharp white teeth.

"I wonder what Milady will say to him?" remarked Nancy doubtfully, when their next "out-to-tea" afternoon came round. It was her day for nursing Billy, since Val had had him the day before; and it was not to be thought of that he should stay behind unless she kept him company.

"She looks a kind old thing," said Val, though determined to defend Billy with his last gasp if she attacked him. The way she glared when they entered the study made him hasten to Nancy's side.

But though her indignant great green eyes seemed like fiery emerald stars, she made no protest until her master put out his hand to stroke the bundle of wriggling legs and silky fur that Nancy presented to him. The sight of this was too much for her; with her tail in the air and her head held high she stalked to a distant corner, where she hid herself under an old oak bureau and refused to be coaxed out.

"She'll come round presently," said the Grey Man. "I'm sorry we hurt her feelings. To be jealous is one of the silliest things in the world, but Milady does not know that. 'Did *I* ever have a dog?' Yes, once. He died, and I have never wanted another."

"Because you loved that one so much?" asked Nancy, softly. And the Grey Man nodded.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"His name was Nippo," he told her, "and he, like Billy, was a Fox Terrier. Wherever I went, he never left me, following me on my rounds, and making friends with everyone. The men in hospital always said that he knew what sort of a night they had had before they spoke. To those who hadn't been able to sleep for pain, he'd give a long look of most human sympathy, and press his head softly against the bed, without making a single sound. All his antics and tail-waggings were saved for those who were getting better, and they were more than ready to have a game with him.

"Nippo was a very plucky little beggar, and though he was the smallest dog of his kind I have ever seen, he insisted on regarding himself as my protector. And so he was.

"One night in India a crazy Sepoy, who had taken it into his head that I was the cause of his brother's death, since I had cured his comrade and not cured him, wriggled under the canvas of my tent with a long knife gripped in his thin brown hand. I was sleeping heavily, for I was dead beat; but Nippo, lying at my feet, was always on the watch. He gave the alarm, and a sharp short bark that was strangled in a gasp of pain; for he had flown at the Sepoy's throat, and his knife went through him. The last thing he did, the faithful little brute, was to lick my hand. . . . I think he was glad that he died to save me, for dogs are made like that."

THE DOG TRIBE

"And the Sepoy?" asked Val after a long pause. Nancy was hugging Billy.

"He was taken off to hospital, poor chap. It wasn't his fault, you know, that he had lost his wits. I always tried to remember that."

No one spoke for awhile. It was snowing fast, and the wind sang drearily in the wide chimney. Nancy pressed Billy still closer to her, and rested her chin on his head.

"Dogs are wonderful creatures," the Grey Man went on, and now his voice was clear again. "Most likely they were the first animals ever tamed. Thousands and thousands of years ago, when Man made his weapons and tools of stone, and lived in caves, or in wooden villages built on piles in the beds of lakes, his dog began to keep him company.

"At first, of course, all dogs were wild, as many are to the present day. The various members of the Dog Tribe—Wolves, Jackals and Foxes, as well as Dogs themselves—belong to the Flesh Eaters, so those Wild Dogs must have been very fierce. They hunted in packs, each standing by the other when danger threatened, which gave them an immense advantage. They were ready enough to seize upon the prey that Man had killed if he left it within their reach, but they dare not approach too close to him, since they found he could throw things which bruised and hurt them even from a long distance. This must have scared those Wild

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

Dogs dreadfully, for it was something they could not understand.

"After awhile, Man and Dog became friends ; it is interesting to guess how. Perhaps the Dogs found that men were willing to leave certain parts of their game for them, which they could not carry away themselves; and so decided to help these new and powerful allies by running beside them as they hunted, and driving their quarry to earth. The next thing would be that some special man grew attached to a special dog; and then the rest would be quite easy. Dogs are extremely affectionate creatures, and even a Wolf grows fond of the person who tends and feeds him.

"To think that such a savage creature as a Wolf is Billy's near relation!" cried Val.

"The Eskimo Dog is so like a Wolf that he has often been mistaken for one," the Grey Man answered. "Both these animals express themselves by howling, whether they're pleased or angry, but if shut up near ordinary Dogs, Wolves quickly learn to bark. The Eskimo believes that long ago they had a common grandfather; and, curiously enough, a Wolf is the only animal that an Eskimo Dog won't fly at if his master gives the command.

"You may always know a member of the Dog Tribe by the look of him, just as you may a Cat. Dogs have sharply-pointed muzzles, for one thing, and are differently built from Cats. Look at Billy's claws,

THE DOG TRIBE

and you'll see that, like those of all his kindred, they are comparatively blunt and straight, and can't be drawn back at all. And these two 'tribes' are as different in their ways as they are to look at. Dogs don't stalk their prey, or lie in ambush, as you saw Black Tom do the other day; they rely on their strength and speed to run it down in open country. To be 'as fleet as a Greyhound' means to be extremely swift; and a Wolf can out-distance a Greyhound in a long race. 'Were there ever Wolves in England?' Yes—numbers! At one time there was scarcely a district in England free from them, and in Ireland and Scotland they were even more numerous.

"There were so many Wolves in Yorkshire during the reign of King Athelstan that a man named Acehorn took pity on lone travellers who had to pass that way by night, and built a strong shelter close to Filey in which they could take refuge when chased by these savage animals. Large rewards were offered for Wolves' heads, and one King of England, Henry III., promised tracts of land to any of his nobles who would undertake to kill the fierce creatures. In France, the country nearest to us, there are Wolves now; for there is no sea to keep them out, such as surrounds our British islands, and though they are killed in hundreds, others come to take their place. In Russia, where there are very large numbers still, Wolves have killed over two hundred people sometimes in one year, and a

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

Laplander's idea of peace and security is to live in a land where there are no Wolves! They are found to-day nearly all over Europe and Asia, as well as in many parts of North America and Greenland. In South America there's a big 'Maned' Wolf with a stripe of black hair down his yellow back. His dismal howl—'A-gua-a—'gives him his native name."

"Wolves sound 'most as bad as Tigers," said Nancy, glad to remember there were none in England now.

"Just as bad, in their way," the Grey Man answered, "for in winter time, when they're savage with hunger, they hunt in great troops, or packs. And knowing that he is one of many, the cowardly Wolf becomes courageous. He's cunning, too, and so extremely wary that it is almost impossible to trap him at any time. Ravenous as he may be, he won't touch an animal that he finds tethered on the plains lest it may have been put there as bait for him, and everything new and strange he looks upon as suspicious.

"A pack of Wolves has usually a leader, who plays the part of general. Dividing his forces into two, he sends one party to follow the trail of the intended victim, while the other 'lopes' in a long swinging gait over plain or forest by a short cut, so as to cut off the line of retreat. In this way Wolves successfully attack such large animals as Horned Cattle and



Wolf



THE DOG TRIBE

Horses, Elk and Deer ; and since forty miles in a single night is no great distance for a pack to travel, no one knows where they may not suddenly appear.

“In summer they find plenty of food, preying on Hares and Rabbits, Mice and Rats, Hedgehogs, Birds, and Snakes — anything, indeed that comes their way. At this time they hunt singly, or in couples, for the packs break up at courting time, when the males fight savagely for their mates. Their cubs, some six to ten in a litter, are born in early spring ; and Lord Wolseley tells us that when in North India he often heard of a human baby having been carried off by a Wolf and brought up with her own young. For hundreds of years people have laughed at the story, which I daresay Val knows, of Romulus and Remus — two boys who were suckled by a Wolf ; but this may really have been quite true ! A Wolf would be likely to seize up a baby and carry it off in her mouth, and if her cubs did not happen to be hungry when she brought it to them, they would play with it instead of eating it. The mother Wolf then would look upon it as one of the family, and feed it as she did her own.

“Wolves mostly hunt in the twilight, or in the dark, but in lonely spots during the summer they sometimes venture out by day, and a traveller has often caught sight of a long lean creature, with his tail hanging over his haunches, instead of held

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

jauntily upward, like the Dog's, crossing a wooded path, or watching him from a thicket, or a jutting out corner of rock. 'How big is a Wolf?' That depends upon where you find him.

"The Indian Wolf is small and slight, his body being only about three feet long; but the Alaskan Wolf is a huge creature, the largest of all the Dog Tribe except certain enormous hounds. The Coyote, or Prairie Wolf, again, is a small animal, somewhat like the Jackal. He belongs to North America, and has thick long fur and a bushy tail. Sheep are the only large animals he is ever known to attack, and when he can get them he feeds on juniper berries, and prickly pears. His home is a burrow, which he digs out in some sandy bank; and he never fights except to defend himself.

"After the Wolf, the next animal of importance in the Dog Tribe is the Jackal. His muzzle is sharper than that of the Wolf, though blunter than a Fox's, and he's seldom more than three feet long, including his bushy tail. In colour he's fawn, or a dingy grey, which deepens into dark brown or black on his sides and back. The Arabs call him the 'Deeb,' or Howler, because of the noise he makes at night; and he's such a mischievous little beggar that they haven't a good word for him, though he clears their streets by devouring offal, and other nasty things."

"What else does he do?" enquired Val curiously.

"In the daytime he hides, but at night he comes

THE DOG TRIBE

out and joins his pack, which is sometimes two hundred strong. If Lions or Tigers are in the neighbourhood, he's delighted to eat what they've left behind, often following them long distances for this purpose; if not, he will carry off sheep and poultry from the village nearest to his haunts, or ravage orchards and vineyards. He is found in Asia, and in the Old Testament is often spoken of as the 'Fox,' whose cunning he certainly shares. If he sees himself watched he will hide his booty, pretending to run off with something else, and by and bye come back for it, when he thinks the coast is clear. In India he's hunted with foxhounds. Sometimes he's tamed, and then, they say, he wags his tail and behaves exactly like a Dog. It is quite likely that the distant great-grandfathers of some of our Dogs were Jackals, for these two animals resemble each other in many different ways.

"And now we come to Mr Reynard, who is the hero of more folk tales and fairy tales than you could count. He's clever, and bold, and cunning, a real 'Red Rover' of the countryside who rather reminds me of Robin Hood, and other merry highwaymen of days gone by. Nothing daunts him—he's been known to breakfast on tender young hens with only a wall and a stretch of grass between him and a pack of hounds. He hunts by himself, or with his mate, and sniffs round beforehand to see from which side the wind is blowing, that if possible his scent may not be

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

carried to his destined prey. Sometimes this 'scent' of his, which comes from a gland under his tail, and is very strong, is said to frighten a Hare or Rabbit into a kind of trance, keeping the little beast from moving, transfixed to the spot by sheer terror. When chased by the hounds, the Fox takes refuge in the queerest places, such as a drain or a drawing-room chimney! At the end of a long run, one Fox chose a large brown stone in the centre of a stream, in full view of the hunt, as the likeliest place of shelter. He lay perfectly still, not moving a muscle, and presently the hounds raced by; as Mr Reynard guessed, they did not see him, for his body was the colour of the stone.

"The Fox is found all over Europe, in many parts of Asia, and in North America and Africa, so he is the most travelled member of all the Dog Tribe. There are ever so many kinds of him, from the Common Fox you see in England to the beautiful little Arctic Fox, which is grey in summer and white in winter, and is killed in such numbers for its fur. He generally digs out an 'earth' for himself, wherever he may be; but sometimes he finds a home ready made, in the shape of a burrow that once belonged to a Rabbit or to a Badger. His young ones are blunt-nosed, funny little creatures, and are very easily tamed."

The twins might have heard much more about Foxes but for Billy, who had by this time grown tired of Nancy's knee, and was trotting round to

THE DOG TRIBE

explore. He meant no harm when he poked his head under the big bureau, but Milady, still sulky, was roused to fury. Hissing like a small and excited steam engine, she flew out and boxed his ears, rolling him over and scratching his nose until he yelled with surprise and pain. Val rushed indignantly to the rescue, and Milady, more disgusted than ever, retreated to her lair.

CHAPTER VII

ANIMALS THAT LAUGH

AND now," said Val, when Billy had been comforted, and was pretending to be asleep with one bright eye opening occasionally to make sure that his enemy was not near, "I want to hear about the animal that laughs. I forget his name, or where he lives," he went on, frowning very hard. "But he hides all day in darksome caves, and comes out at night to make the most dreadful noises."

"You mean the Hyena," said the Grey Man; "a beast that's still found in many parts of Asia and Africa, and has been known from earliest times. Long before the days of those 'Ancient Britons' you read about in history, so long ago, indeed, that you couldn't count the years, fierce Hyenas haunted the rocky caves, or hid in the great forests of the land on which you and I live. Their bones have been found buried deep in the earth, and with them were the bones of the creatures they had preyed on, all marked with the dents of their teeth. 'What sort of creatures?' Young Elephants and Rhinoceroses, and Cave Bears too. Hyenas were larger

ANIMALS THAT LAUGH

and fiercer then than they are now, and were among the most deadly enemies that the first men of all had to overcome. These 'primitive men,' as they are called, took possession of Hyena caves when they learnt how to 'make fire'; for even if the Hyena were as brave as he is cowardly, like all other animals he would be afraid of fire.

"No one guessed for a long time that these brutes had ever lived except in very hot climates, and far away, so naturalists were surprised when an Englishman discovered the den of some ancient Hyenas in a cave not very far from York. He knew it must have been their den, though lots of other bones were found there too, because these, as I told you, were marked with Hyenas' teeth, and crushed and splintered just as Hyenas crush and splinter bones to-day. Some Hyena bones had Hyena teeth-marks, too; so the brutes must have fed upon their own kind also!

"The smaller Hyena of to-day is not a pleasant beast either, though we mustn't be too hard upon him, since he has his uses. I don't know what they would do in the East without him, for in many of the towns and villages they have a horrid custom of throwing their refuse out into the streets, and this would breed no end of diseases if the Hyena did not devour it. From dusk till dawn he prowls around, gobbling up decaying matter which no other animal would touch. And because of this,

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

though he's everywhere hated, men let him live in certain numbers."

"What does he belong to?" questioned Val. "I hope it isn't to the Dog Tribe!"

"He has a family all to himself," explained the Grey Man. "He isn't a Cat, though some of his teeth are Cat-like, and I believe he has the Cats' rough tongue. And he doesn't belong to the Dog Tribe, either, though in some ways his body resembles a Dog's. There is only one animal that's at all like him; he's called the Aard-Wolf, and he, too, is counted as quite by himself.

"There are three kinds of Hyenas known to-day—the Spotted Hyena, the largest and fiercest; the Striped, and the Brown Hyena. You shall hear of the Spotted Hyena first, for he's much the worst of the three. Ah! here comes our tea. I'll tell you about him after."

"All Hyenas," he went on presently, "are ugly creatures to look at, with coarse shaggy hair and tremendous jaws, armed with teeth so strong that it is almost impossible to get anything away from them that they have seized; and they can smash up the bone of a great Ox as easily as if it were a Chicken's. Their forelegs, which they use to dig with when they want to get at buried carrion, are longer than their hindlegs, and this gives them a curious shuffling gait, although they get over the ground very quickly.

"When we say a Hyena 'laughs,' we don't mean



Hyena

ANIMALS THAT LAUGH

that he is jolly or good-tempered ! His laughter is one of the most horrible sounds I have ever listened to, for his howl takes this form when he is excited or enraged, and it seems to belong rather to a demon than an animal. Sometimes he 'laughs' in hundreds, all the night through ; and it is difficult for those within sound to get a wink of sleep, even though they know they are perfectly safe behind thick walls.

"The Spotted Hyena belongs to South Africa, and on starless nights he lurks round the Kaffir's huts, killing and dragging away any goat or heifer tethered near, or even a mule or pony. If he stopped at this, one would forgive him ; but he will, if he can, creep into a hut by the hole near the ground which stands for a door, and seize upon some baby or little child as it sleeps in its mother's arms. So swift is he in all his movements, that before she has time to wake he is out through the hole again, and away to the jungle.

"Another favourite trick of his is to lie in wait outside a hut and snap at the Kaffirs' faces as they crawl out in the very early morning ; and though they do their best to trap and kill him, he is so cunning and wary that more often than not he escapes. Strong and powerful as he is, he always prefers to attack weak and helpless creatures rather than those which would have a fair chance in open fight ; and if he sees that a man is wounded, he loses all dread of him.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"The only Hyena in India is the Striped one. Unlike his spotted cousin, who hunts in packs, he is a very solitary creature, and is seldom seen except in ones or twos. His forelegs are more out of proportion still, so he's even more ungainly: and his ears are larger and quite pointed, while along the middle of his back he has a crest of long hair which he can erect when he pleases. His colour's a sort of dingy grey, and he's so seldom seen by daylight, the only time when his stripes are visible, that for a long while it was said there were no Striped Hyenas in East Africa. But there are, as also in India and Syria; so it is a very good thing for the small brown babies that these content themselves with the refuse thrown out for them, and the leavings of other animals. Sometimes, however, they leave their holes in the rocks to carry off a Dog or a Sheep, but, like the Wolves, they are said never to touch a live animal tethered as bait for a Lion or Tiger, though they are ready enough to feed upon this once it is killed.

"The Brown Hyena is much more rare than either of the other kinds. He haunts the coast of some parts of South Africa, where they call him the 'Strand Wolf,' and he loves to feed on dead fish and Crabs, or perhaps on a stranded Whale. If driven by hunger, he does not hesitate to make his way to a cattle kraal, or enclosure, and will then kill and eat a Sheep. His spots are dark brown, on a yellowish ground, and his legs are marked with stripes."

ANIMALS THAT LAUGH

"Hyenas are just horrid," said Val; and Nancy nodded. She thought so, too.

"I heard not long ago of a tame one that was as affectionate as a Dog," the Grey Man told them. "He recognised his master with the utmost joy though he had not seen him for years. And though the Hyena isn't a favourite anywhere, there's a story about one which Nancy will like to hear.

"A long time ago, they say in the East, a man wrongly accused of a terrible crime went daily in fear of his life. A price had been set upon his head, and wherever he turned, there were spies lying in wait for him. At last, in despair, he sought shelter in a lonely cave on the side of a very steep hill, where he thought he might die in peace.

"But as he lay on the hard ground, every limb in his body aching with fatigue, he heard faint sounds close beside him, and, looking up, saw the gleam of six yellow eyes! They belonged to three Hyena cubs who were wondering very much what sort of creature had come to their home, and if it would be safe to go and sniff at him.

"Presently the boldest ventured, and the others followed. The poor fellow had guessed by now that he was in a Hyena's den, but he felt much too weak and faint to move, and so lay still. And there he was, with the cubs tumbling over him, when the Hyena mother came home.

"And because they had made friends with him

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

already, and he had shown no wish to hurt them, their mother would not hurt Abdul either, though at first she had growled and snarled. He went to sleep with one of the warm little creatures for a pillow, and woke rested and refreshed.

"The mother Hyena had gone hunting, but the cubs were waiting to play with him. So lonely did he feel that he welcomed their company; it comforted him that they did not fear him, though his fellowmen thought him all that was vile.

"When he grew hungry he found some berries on the bushes that hid the mouth of the cave, and he slaked his thirst at a tiny stream that trickled over the stones, and gleamed and sparkled in the silver moonlight. Then he crept back to the dark again, for he knew that even on that bleak hillside there might be watching eyes.

"He had dozed off to sleep when he heard an uneasy whine from one of the baby Hyenas. It was just dawn, and a faint ray of light pierced the mouth of the cave, and showed him the figure of a man. It was someone he knew, and by no means a friend, who had marked down the Hyena's den, and had now come to carry off her young ones.

"Abdul was at the far corner, and he knew that if he kept perfectly still he would be undiscovered. But it seemed to him a treacherous thing to allow those frolicksome little creatures who had played on his breast to be slain in front of his very eyes, and before

ANIMALS THAT LAUGH

he knew, he had cried out: 'Hold! I will not have them killed!'

"You can guess how surprised the stranger was when he recognised Abdul's voice. He put by his knife, and thought what he would do. For he was poor, and it was a very large sum that was set on Abdul's head.

"Then Abdul told how it was with him; that this cave had been his only refuge, and that the mother of the cubs had not sought to harm him, though he was weak and spent. And the stranger marvelled greatly that Abdul should have been willing to betray his hiding-place rather than the cubs should be killed.

" 'I will not be less generous,' he said, 'but will keep thy secret. And when it is safe for thee to return to thy home, behold, thou shalt have word.

"So when the mother Hyena returned, she found her cubs as she had left them. And the men of Abdul's tribe declare that in some way or other the little creatures must have told what had befallen during her absence, for she came and fawned at Abdul's feet, making strange sounds to express her gratitude. And after that—so the story runs—each night, until it was safe for Abdul to return home, she brought food for him; not the putrid meat that she chose for her own, but a fresh-killed bird or hare."

"The car has come, Sir," said the butler just

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

then. And the twins knew that this meant 'bed-time'; it was snowing harder than ever now, and they were to be driven home.

"Just five minutes more!" entreated Nancy, loth to leave the snug little nest she had made for herself and Billy on the corner of the Grey Man's couch. And Val remembered, just in time, that they hadn't heard yet about the animal just a little like the Hyena.

"That's the Aard-Wolf," the Grey Man said, "sometimes known as the 'Maned Jackal.' The Kaffirs call him the Isadawane; and if you were to meet him in Africa, his native land, you might at first mistake him for a very thin Striped Hyena with a bushy tail. His teeth, however, are quite unlike a Hyena's, and he has five toes on his forefeet and four on his hindfeet, the Hyena having only four on each. The crest of dark hairs along his back can be made to stand up whenever he likes, so I daresay he could look quite fierce. But he's timid, like most burrowing creatures. 'Aard-Wolf' means 'Earth-Wolf' and he earned his name because he digs a home for himself underground. His food is partly carrion—food which he finds already killed for him. But he uses those strong blunt claws of his to dig White Ants, or Termites, out of their hills, for he loves to feast on these.

"Now, Good night, and be off! If I send you home late, your granny mayn't let you come again."

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORY OF HAIRY-FOOT

IT was almost dark in the Grey Man's library when the twins went to see him on Christmas Eve. The elves Nancy fancied she saw when the flames danced high up the wide chimney had gone to sleep in the heart of the glowing embers, and the Grey Man said, "Not just yet, Parkins!" when the solemn butler would have turned up the lights.

"We've left Billy at home," said Val, as Nancy found her way to the couch and settled herself in her usual place by the Grey Man's side. "He won't ever let us go out without him if he can help it, but we shut him up when he wasn't looking, and came away as quick as quick! We thought Milady might scratch him again if we brought him here, and his nose is only just well."

A rustle came from the Grey Man's pillows, on one of which the dignified Milady sat with her paw on *The Times*.

"I believe she understands!" cried Nancy. And there was certainly an air of deep satisfaction in the way that Milady purred.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"We've brought her a pink silk bow," said Val forgivingly, "so's she can look fine for Christmas. And we thought you'd like this. It's a surprise. You mustn't open it till to-morrow."

"This" was a fat and knobby parcel, containing a miniature cannon that made "real 'splosions" when properly fed with caps, and other treasures equally dear to Val. Nancy's offering was her beloved Hans Andersen, which she had read again and again.

"The pictures are coloured!" she told the Grey Man, as he felt its edges through the brown paper, and anxiously enquired what it might be. "They're lovely. You can almost see the fairies nod at you if you screw your eyes up tight."

"I can soon do that!" said the Grey Man, hopefully, and when Val had finished his mysterious cautions concerning the "something he'd find inside," he drew Nancy close to him and cleared his throat.

"I have a surprise for you, too," he said. "Val, do you think you can turn on the lights? You'll find the switch by the door. That's right!"

And on the twins' enraptured sight there flashed a glittering Christmas tree. The daintiest fairies in white and gold hovered over the laden boughs, while dazzling balls of coloured glass vied with shining tinsel and gorgeous fruit. Close to the top, sharing the post of honour with Santa Claus and the Fairy Queen, was a White Bear carrying a tree of mistletoe.

THE STORY OF HAIRY-FOOT

"Yes—the tree's for you!" the Grey Man said, as Val and Nancy sighed with delight. "It came down from town in a big crate, and I believe the maids have spent half the morning in fastening on things that had toppled off."

The twins had scarcely breath to thank him, for, as Val said, that tree grew "splendider and splendider" each time they looked at it. The Grey Man had written, "Spare no expense," when he sent his order, and the prettiest things in a London shop had gone to deck its branches.

"Is it for our very own?" asked Nancy softly, as she gazed at a fairy doll.

"For your very own, to do just as you like with!" the Grey Man said; and Nancy and Val stopped looking at the tree to stare at each other instead.

"It's for US. He says so!" Val told Nancy, guessing at once where her thoughts had flown. She did not answer, but her face grew wistful, and Val's eyes drooped before hers.

"Well, I don't mind," he said at last, with a queer little twist of his shoulders. "Those kids can have it if you like. Poor little beggars—won't they be glad! They'll think they're dreaming!"

"He means the - children - who - haven't - any-mothers!" said Nancy, turning to the Grey Man. "We saw the Home where they live this morning, when Grandmother took us for a drive. She said

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

she didn't s'pose they'd have *any* Christmas presents, except just nuts and oranges. And Val and I said that if we were fairies we'd give them a Christmas tree."

"Well, you *are* 'fairies' now," smiled the Grey Man. "Friendly fairies, you know, like the jolly little brownies, who go round helping to make folks glad. I'll send up the tree to the Home to-morrow, but now you shall choose what you'll have for yourselves. Nancy must have the Fairy Queen, and there's a fine Highland Regiment for you, Val, underneath the biggest bough."

So Parkins was summoned to cut down the Queen, who at closer view was even more beauteous than Nancy had thought, and the Polar Bear, with his misletoe tree, took Val's heart quite by storm.

"Bears are my very most favourite animals," he said a little later, as he munched one of the almond chocolates he had found inside him. "Couldn't you tell us about bears to-day? Have you ever seen one? Alive, I mean."

"The last I saw was very much so," said the Grey Man dryly; "indeed, it's a wonder he left *me* alive! I was exploring Greenland with Jim Keith, who wanted to see whether the rocks would tell him anything of the birds and animals that lived there long ago. We were walking across an ice-field, when I suddenly felt Something grip my neck. Before I could even call out, a huge Polar Bear,



Polar Bear

THE STORY OF HAIRY-FOOT

who had crept up from behind, snapped his teeth right through my shoulder. The pain was so great that I must have fainted, for I don't remember anything more.

"Keith had gone on a short way ahead, and looked round on hearing a low fierce growl, to see me lying flat on the ice with the great Bear sitting a few yards off. He was waiting to see if I were really dead, for a Polar Bear doesn't like his meal to wriggle, although a Grizzly doesn't mind a bit.

"Neither I nor Keith had brought a gun, for we had not expected to come across anything larger than a Seal; and that gaunt Polar Bear looked very fierce. But Keith was equal to him—he raised the hammer he carried for breaking rock, and flung it straight at the grim brute's head. 'What did the Bear do?' He ran away! And very thankful we were!

"Most likely he had not seen a man before, and his hunger was not strong enough to overcome his fear of a two-legged creature who could throw things! Anyhow, he shuffled off at a great pace, and we took care after that never to leave the ship unarmed. We saw nothing more of Polar Bears, however, though one night a big one came on deck and carried off a Dog. We found his tracks across the snow; they ended beside a floating ice-berg."

Val thoughtfully stroked the White Bear he held, dislodging some of the sparkling frost from his fur.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"He looks such a nice, kind beast," he said. "You'd never think he would try to hurt people!"

"It's only when he is ravenously hungry that he attacks men, Val, and he *is* 'kind' to his own kindred. They say he's devoted to his mate, and a mother Bear would give her life to save her young one. I could tell you a story about that!"

"Tell it just as you think it happened!" cried Val, who wanted the story to be a long one.

"And let it begin with 'Once upon a time,'" said Nancy. The Grey Man gave her a little hug, for long, long ago, when someone had told *him* stories, he had asked this too.

"Well, 'once upon a time,'" he began, "there was a little white Polar Bear that his mother called 'Hairy-foot.' This was because, though all Polar Bears have hairs on the soles of their feet, so that they can get a good grip on the slippery icfields they have to cross, those on her youngsters' were almost as thick as fur. There was no fear that he would lose his footing when he sprang on a floating ice-berg to see the world, as his sire, Strength-of-ten, had done. Polar Bears, you know, sometimes travel far out to sea in this way, and they're such fine swimmers that they have been seen forty miles from the shore, even when there was no ice in sight for them to rest on.

"Hairy-foot was born right under the snow, in the snug, deep hole which his mother had dug for

THE STORY OF HAIRY-FOOT

herself when she knew the long night of winter was near. All through the brief arctic spring and summer she had wandered with her mate, diving for fish as she swam beside him on the crest of the waves, or feasting on the birds' eggs and juicy berries on the low banks that grew green almost in a night once the snow had melted.

"But when autumn came, and the Wild Swans and Geese which had flown North to breed spread their wings towards a warmer clime, Whitethroat—this was the name of Hairy-foot's mother—grew very tired.

"‘I must sleep!’ she cried, and lay down in the snow. And it covered her over, soft and warm, its feathery flakes falling very lightly.

"And presently, as still she lay snugly under the snow, a baby Bear came to keep her company, and they slept together until the Spring. When the frozen snow was thawing quickly under the breath of a soft South wind, Whitethroat pushed her way out to daylight. She was very thin now, for like all mother Bears, she had lived through the winter on fat stored up during summer days, when food had been very plentiful. She was, of course, most dreadfully hungry; so hungry that she felt she had a wolf gnawing away inside her!

"But the first thing she did was to provide a meal for the little fellow who toddled after her, peeping inquisitively at the strange white world

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

in which he found himself. She caught his first fish for him where the ice had melted close to the shore, and did not eat herself until he was satisfied.

"Those were happy days for the little Bear. Can't you picture him trotting along on the icefields, asking, 'Why is the snow so white, Mother?' or, 'Why haven't we wings like the birds?' I feel sure all young creatures want to know things, and if you watch animal mothers quietly, as I have done sometimes when they did not know, you will see them trying to explain things to them in their own particular way. They——"

"You should just see how curious Billy is," Val interposed. "He wanted to know most dreadfully what Grandmother kept in the box beside her dressing table, but he couldn't push away the lid. So what did he do, but roll the box over, so that the lid fell right off! Then he worried poor Granny's cap to find out what it was made of; there was scarcely anything left of it when we went to see why he barked."

"Hairy-foot learnt all his mother could teach him," the Grey Man went on when Val came to an end, "and I have an idea that she was very proud of him. He killed his first Fox so neatly that it died without a struggle, and when he wanted to chase a Wolf that snatched a Hare from under his very nose, she said to the Seagulls that it was clear he was going to be a mighty hunter. Day by day she took

THE STORY OF HAIRY-FOOT

him further across the icefields, showing him how to hunt for Seals; and though he was still but a very small Bear, he was almost as quick as she to spy a tiny 'blow-hole' in the ice. A 'blow-hole,' you must know, is the little hole a Seal makes in the ice to poke up his head to breathe through. When a Polar Bear finds a Seal's blow-hole, he patiently lies in wait beside it, ready to grab the poor Seal's head the moment he gets the chance.

"One afternoon when Whitethroat and Hairy-foot were coming home after a long excursion, the old Bear lifted her head and growled. That very keen nose of hers had sniffed a scent she had not smelt before, and something inside her whispered, 'Danger! Get away as quick as you can!'

"Let us hasten, my little son!" she cried, turning sharply in the opposite direction.

"'But I am tired,' whispered Hairy-foot. 'Can't we sit down by this mossy bank, and watch the Gulls' flying race?'

"'Not for a moment!' she answered sharply, showing her teeth at him for the first time. Grieved and surprised at her sudden sternness, the small Bear trotted meekly on, doing his best to keep up with her, though his fat legs ached.

"'Make haste, O make haste, my little one!' urged Whitethroat, anxious that he should follow her with still more speed. Her ears had caught the sound of hurrying footsteps, and her quivering

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

nostrils sniffed again this unknown scent she dreaded. Alone, she could soon have left her pursuers far behind, but it was of her cub she was thinking now—the little creature who lay beside her o' nights, and drew his warmth from her body. . . .

“Nearer and nearer the footsteps came, and Hairy-foot, alas, lagged more and more; he was tired out. Whitethroat saw this, and his danger sharpened her wits.

“‘Sit!’ she commanded; and as he wonderingly obeyed, she came behind him and pushed his back with her outstretched paws, so sending him for several yards on across the slippery ice. Springing up to him again and again, she did this repeatedly, Hairy-foot helping her all he could by placing himself in the right position for her to push directly he had stopped sliding.

“But in spite of all her efforts, their foes were gaining on them swiftly; Whitethroat could hear their shouts, and knew that her end was near.

“Not far ahead was a wide channel of surging water which cut them off from another icefield. If Hairy-foot could but gain that, he would be safe; for the sea was still too icy cold for human beings to breast.

“‘My little one, O my little one!’ she cried again, and a shower of bullets whizzed round her head. Not for a moment did she pause; but one push more, and her baby would be with her friend, the sea. She

THE STORY OF HAIRY-FOOT

gave that push as a shot pierced her side, and saw Hairy-foot splash through the crest of a wave.

“The little chap dived as she had taught him, coming up for a second only when he couldn’t breathe under water any more. Revived by his bath, he scrambled presently upon the further sheet of ice, making sure that his mother would follow him soon. Expecting every minute to hear her breath behind him, he trotted briskly along ; but though he called for her all that night, he never saw her again.”

“Poor little Bear!” said Nancy, with a catch in her soft voice. And Val said, stroking Milady’s head, “I’m glad the children-who-haven’t-any-mothers are going to have our tree.”

CHAPTER IX

MORE ABOUT BEARS

NANCY was still sighing over White-throat's fate when a very loud scratching was heard outside the window, which opened into the garden.

"Why, it's Billy!" cried Val. And so it was—Billy without a collar, and looking extremely indignant.

"How *could* you leave me behind?" he said with his faithful eyes, and regardless of a warning hiss from Milady, he flung himself on Nancy's lap. But for the Grey Man's protecting arm, there would have been a battle royal, and even as it was, Milady gave her rival a parting scratch ere she once more retired to a distant corner.

"He must have slipped his head through his collar when somebody tried to hold him," said Val. "He growls as if he were a Bear himself, though he isn't a bit like one."

"No," said the Grey Man, stroking Billy's head, "though in days gone by—perhaps long before Man lived on the earth at all!—there were dog-like animals that closely resembled Bears, some being quite as big! Like Bears to-day, they had five toes on each

MORE ABOUT BEARS

foot, and trod with their feet quite flat on the ground. But their teeth were dog-like, and wise men say that ancient Dogs and ancient Bears must at one time have had the same great grand-father !

“Among living animals, Bears come all by themselves, and are like no other kind of creature except the Great Panda, which used to be called the ‘Parti-Coloured Bear,’ but is now looked upon as one of the Raccoons. ‘What are Raccoons?’ Furry little fellows found in America, with thick coats of dark brown tipped with grey, and bushy tails ringed with black on a greyish ground. They build their ‘nests’ high up in the trees in nooks and hollows, but come down at dusk to hunt for food. They eat Rats and Mice, and Freshwater Tortoises, and Frogs and Fish; but in China, where the Great Panda is found, he is said by the natives to feed chiefly on roots and young shoots of bamboo. He’s about the size of a small young Brown Bear, and while the better part of his coat is white, his fore and hind-limbs are entirely black. Black rings surround his eyes, and his ears are black; there’s a black band, too, right round his shoulders. ‘He must look funny?’ That’s what people say who have seen him! No European has caught one yet, for his favourite haunts are high up in the mountains, in jungles of bamboo and rhodedendrons. The Smaller Panda in the Zoo has a label on his cage which says, ‘Cat-Bear.’ I was looking at him the

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

last time I was in town, and thought him one of the funniest-looking little beasts that I had ever seen! The upper part of his body was the colour of carrots, but his thick little legs were jet black. He had a fine tail, not so very unlike Milady's, and a face belonging to a baby Bear!"

Val unscrewed the head of his white one that Nancy and he might have more chocolates, and Billy woke up to demand his share. It was comical to see how cautiously he licked one before he snapped it up, sniffing enquiringly at the same time, as if to be sure it was fit to eat.

"Young animals sniff at strange food by instinct," said the Grey Man, "and Bears, who are not so quick-sighted as some, nor able to run as quickly from an enemy, are protected by a peculiarly keen sense of smell, which warns them as to the whereabouts of their foes as well as teaches them how to distinguish wholesome from poisonous food.

"It is wonderful to me how all the wood-folk know so well what to eat and what to avoid; but Nature tells them in her own way. White Bears and Grizzlies are fond of flesh, but the rest of the Bears eat roots and berries, and honey if they can get it! It is quite a sight to see a big brown Bear scooping out the delicious amber stickiness with one stout paw, with the angry bees swarming round him. He doesn't mind their stings a bit, and smacks his lips like a greedy child."

MORE ABOUT BEARS

"I s'pose white Bears and brown would look exactly the same if they weren't a different colour," said Nancy. "Of course!" grinned Val, and the Grey Man smiled.

"Not 'exactly,'" he remarked, "for though all Bears have thick limbs and short tails, and five strongly clawed toes on each foot, the Polar Bear's head is smaller and narrower than that of a Brown Bear, while his ears are smaller, and his neck is longer. There's also a difference in his teeth; and teeth are almost the very first things we look at when we want to distinguish one creature from another. Then, the soles of the White Bear's feet are hairy, instead of smooth."

"So's he won't slip on the ice—I remember!—when he is hunting Seals. Tell us about the other Bears. I'd like to hear about Grizzlies first."

"Well, the Grizzly, or 'Grisly,' as I believe he ought really to be called, since this means 'fierce' and 'terrible,' is altogether different from ordinary Brown Bears, which are friendly and peace-loving animals as a rule, only anxious to live and let live. His front claws are extremely long and powerful—much longer than his hind ones; and the thick shaggy hair on his flanks and shoulders help to give him a savage appearance. His fur is usually a brownish yellow, or reddish brown, and his legs are considerably darker. He is sometimes fully ten feet long, and may weigh as much as 1,000 lbs. And his strength is something enormous. He has

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

been known to kill and to carry off a splendid Wapiti Deer as heavy as himself, and to break a Bison's neck at a single blow.

“Polar Bears are lords of the ice and snow, and live in the Arctic regions; but Grizzlies are chiefly found in the Rocky Mountains, being seldom met with now even in the United States, where once they were greatly dreaded. Only the young ones can climb trees, and many a hunter has escaped from a wounded and savage Grizzly by swarming up some tall pine. The Bears are very fond of pine-nuts, by the way. They watch to see where the squirrels hide their winter stores on the hill-sides, and gobble these up in no time!

“Many stories are told of ordinary Brown Bears, which are found in almost every part of the globe, except Australia. Like the Grizzlies, they stand up on their hind legs to attack, and hug their victims to death; but this they only do in self-defence. A child once strayed away by herself, and wandered into a deep forest. After searching for hours, her mother found her beside what she called ‘a dear big brown doggie,’ for whom she had made a wreath of flowers. The ‘big brown doggie’ was a big Brown Bear, who had kept the little thing company in her loneliness and patiently allowed herself to be played with! She shuffled away when the mother seized her child, looking back several times over her shoulder as if hoping to be recalled.”



Brown Bear

MORE ABOUT BEARS

"I read in my history book that ever so long ago Bears lived in England!" Val remarked, rather proud of being able to tell Nancy this. "When Queen Elizabeth reigned, it said, there used to be gardens where Bears fought with Dogs, who worried them till they died. The Bears were chained, you know, so's they couldn't fight properly. I think it was ever so cruel."

"So it was, Val," agreed the Grey Man, "and it's something to know that though we're still not nearly considerate enough of the animals God has put under our care, Bear-baiting would not be possible in our country now. Even 'dancing Bears,' which at one time were dragged from town to town by pieces of rope fastened to rings in their noses, are seldom met with to-day. Poor creatures! Some of their masters were kind enough, no doubt, though many Bears suffered tortures in learning the 'tricks' that delighted the lookers-on, who knew nothing of the sharp prongs and red-hot irons that had borne their part in the animals' training.

"Like most 'dumb' beasts, these performing Bears are very ready to love their masters. Two Frenchmen, travelling through England, were sentenced to imprisonment for blocking the traffic by letting their Bear perform in the middle of a road, and the Magistrate ordered them to go to prison. 'Where they go, I go!' declared the Bear, in a series of angry growls; and he defended himself against

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

attack so gallantly that the constables were at their wits' end as to how to separate him from his friends. At last they managed to coax him into an omnibus, in order to take him off to the Zoo; but when he found that his masters were left behind, he calmly climbed out of one of the windows and stopped the bus by hanging on to a wheel! It was not until the poor Frenchmen were let out of prison in order to take him that he could be got to the Zoo at all.

"Brown Bears roamed the woods in our own country until about the end of the eleventh century. In Ancient Greece they were called 'Kings of the Wood,' and there are many to-day in Russia, where Bear-hunting is still a favourite sport. An English lady who had been staying at St Petersburg brought back this story of one.

"A certain Count was hunting Bears some fifty miles from his castle, and so eager was he for sport that he did not notice how quickly the day was passing. It was dusk before he knew, and now that the dark protected two Bears and their cubs which he had sighted, he was afraid he must give up the chase.

"Just as he made up his mind to return, he heard what he fancied might be a suppressed growl from a deep thicket in front of him; he fired several times into the midst of the bushes, but thought it more prudent, since he was alone, not to follow up his shot until the morning.

"Early next day he returned to the spot, and

MORE ABOUT BEARS

found a young cub, just dead, in the hollow of a tree, to which it had dragged itself on being wounded the night before. Its body was toppled into an open cart, and riding beside it in his coach, the Count hastened back to his Castle. The coachman was told to drive very quickly, since a friend was waiting for his master at home; and the fifty-two miles of open country were covered in a few hours.

"A few minutes after he reached the Castle, word was brought to the Count that a big she-Bear was actually in his park. This was the mother of the dead cub, who had followed her little one's body all the way from her home in the woods, regardless of danger or fatigue! They shot her—yes, it *was* 'dreadful,' Nancy, but they could not leave her at large in the park—and the Count put up a monument on the spot to say how loving and brave she had been. I expect it's there to this very day."

"Go on, please!" said Val, as the Grey Man paused. He liked Bears more than ever now, he thought.

"Most Brown and Black mother-Bears," went on his friend, "sleep all through the winter, too, under the snow or in some snug cave, or the hollow of a tree, and male Bears, especially in some of the colder parts of the world, are known to 'hibernate,' as it is called, in the same way. They are all very thin and fierce when they wake in the spring, and as hungry as can be. The mother Bears, who have their babies to look after, are dangerous to meet with then.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"Baby Bears are born naked, and as blind as kittens! But their eyes are wide open by the time they are five weeks old, and their bodies covered with soft warm fur. They make the most delightful pets for a year or two, but they soon grow too strong to be allowed their liberty, and it's very hard lines for them then to be sent away and shut up in cages."

"I should just *hate* to be shut up!" cried Val, and Nancy flushed. For wasn't her dear Grey Man "shut up," since he couldn't ever go out any more, and climb the hills and see new places? And somehow the Grey Man understood why she laid her soft cheek against his arm.

"I don't mind it half so much now," he whispered; and Nancy lifted her face to his, and kissed him so quietly that Val did not hear.

"And what are the other Bears like?" he demanded, when the silence had lasted too long to please him.

"Well, there's the Aswail or Honey Bear, known as the Sloth Bear also. He is about the same size as the common Brown Bear, and lives in the mountains of India. So different is he in many ways from the rest of the Bear family that he is sometimes said to form a special class of Bear all to himself.

"The Aswail is quite the clumsiest of the Bear Tribe, and if anything frightens him, and he tries to run away, he looks as if there were someone behind him rolling him over and over! His hind

MORE ABOUT BEARS

legs are very extremely short, and his fur very coarse and shaggy. As his second name tells you, he is particularly fond of honey; but he has a great weakness for fruit as well, and does much damage among crops of sugar canes when these are anywhere near his haunts.

“But it’s White Ants, or Termites, that he likes best of all, and he is peculiarly clever in obtaining these. An old friend of mine, a soldier, was lucky enough to be able to watch him when he thought that no one was near.

“The Aswail was crouched at the foot of the Ant Hill, which most likely was several feet high, and grunting and gasping, he scraped and scraped until he came to the combs at the foot of the wonderful galleries the White Ants had made. Then the Aswail blew as hard as he could through his long and india-rubber like snout, blowing away the dust from the Ants’ eggs, or larvæ, and sucking these in with such a loud noise that he could be heard quite two hundred yards away. He was having a fine supper, but I don’t suppose the Ants enjoyed themselves as much as he did.

“It will be tea-time so soon that if I am to tell you about any more Bears I must make haste! There is only one in Africa, and he’s up in the heights of the Atlas Mountains; the only Bear in South America is the Spectacled Bear of the Andes—a little black fellow with light rings round his eyes.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

But North America gives us Black Bears as well as Grizzlies, and the Black Bear I am sure you'd like.

"He is usually timid, though brave enough if attacked, and hides away in the depths of the forest, where he lives chiefly on roots and berries. Sometimes, however, he takes a fancy to poultry, as well as to mice and other small mammals; and then the natives are very angry. But, all the same, they have so much regard for him that they don't dare to kill him without apologising to him first, since they think his 'ghost' most powerful and mysterious, and able to do them any harm it wills. When he is dead they paint their faces, and some of them sing a 'Bear Song,' leaving his skull stuck up on a tree-top as a mark of respect! If they didn't do this, they think, no more Bears would allow themselves to be killed; and besides eating their flesh as a great dainty, they use their skins for tents and coverings, just as the Eskimo and other tribes of the Arctic regions use those of Polar Bears. They cut grass with the sharp blades of the Black Bear's shoulder bones, and some tribes stretch the tough opaque skin they find over certain parts inside him across the holes they leave in their huts to let the light in.

"Then there's the Black Bear of the Himalayas, who has smooth, short fur, and a big, white mark across his chest. He grows so fat when autumn comes that his skin becomes saturated with oil,

MORE ABOUT BEARS

which is lucky for him, as this makes it useless to the hunters. He is very fond of ants and honey, besides acorns and roots and berries. Unfortunately, he has a great liking for fruit as well, and often leaves his forest home to raid the fruit-gardens of Kashmir, and feast upon pears and apricots. He is much more ready to attack mankind than many of his kindred, and strongly resents being interfered with.

“His cousin, the Japanese Black Bear, is almost exactly like him, though the white mark across this last Bear’s chest is not quite so distinct. The Ainus—queer little folk who live in Northern Japan—are known as ‘Bear Worshippers,’ and their great religious festival is ‘The Festival of the Bear.’

“In the spring the Ainus capture a young Bear, which is brought up with their own children, and sometimes suckled by some mother in the tribe. When he gets too big to be played with any more, he is kept in a cage till the next Bear Festival comes round, and then, after the men have danced round him, shouting and yelling, the Bear is let out to be killed. When he’s dead, they offer him their weapons ‘to avenge himself,’ and then they worship his cut-off head! They don’t know any better, you see—that’s the saddest part of it. And *we* mightn’t know any better, either, if we did not live in a Christian land. So we won’t call them ‘silly idiots,’ Val, but just be sorry for them instead.”

CHAPTER X

SEALS AND WALRUSES

BILLY couldn't eat any tea. Not even the crispest of sweet biscuits moved him to more than languid interest, and when Milady, coming out of her corner to taste the clotted cream, showed signs of boxing his ears again, he merely wriggled himself away, and tucked his head under the cushion for safety.

"I'm afraid he's ill," said Val, in an anxious tone ; and even the Grey Man seemed concerned when Billy refused buttered toast.

"The only other time I met a dog that wasn't hungry," he said, "was when I was in Greenland. And he, the rascal, had dug up some pounds of Seal flesh which a native had buried under the snow, and eaten until he could eat no more. Perhaps Billy has done the same."

"But where would he find the Seal flesh?" asked Nancy, much troubled ; and she wondered why Val laughed.

"Billy wouldn't like Seal flesh, even if he could get it," said the Grey Man, "for he'd probably find it much too rich for him. But in Arctic regions, on

SEALS AND WALRUSES

frozen icefields, when the cold is so intense that if you went out with your ears unprotected they would most likely drop off before you knew, both men and beast must eat quantities of fat; for it's fat that supplies our bodies with heat. The Eskimo, born in these icy wastes, is dependent upon Seals and Whales for the greater part of his food; and his appetite is so enormous that he's said to eat half a Seal at a single sitting! But that must be after a long fast, when perhaps he had been snowed up in his hut for days and days.

"I don't know what he would do without the Seals. His canoe is made of sealskin stretched very tightly over a wooden or whalebone frame, with a hole in the middle of the skin for the paddle to come through. Once fastened in, with another skin stretched tightly over the hole so that no water can reach him, the Eskimo is safe, even in a rough sea, for it is almost impossible for his boat to sink.

"His harpoon, a sharp-pointed spear which he throws with great force—has a blown-out sealskin fastened to one end. This forms a kind of balloon, and when the wounded Whale or Seal dives under the water, it floats on the top and shows the hunter where he is. Then he waits close at hand until the Whale comes up to breathe, so that he may harpoon him again. And this goes on till the Whale is killed, when he's hacked into pieces and carried off.

"An Eskimo's boots are made of sealskin, too,

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

and often the baggy fur-suits which make him look such a curious object. He wears two of these in winter-time—one with the fur turned next his skin, and another with the fur turned outwards.

“There are many different kinds of Seals, and travellers in the Arctic regions tell us they’re all intelligent creatures. The Common Seal, which is found on our British Coast, has sometimes been captured as a pup and tamed, to prove a very affectionate pet. There was one I heard of long ago which was the children’s favourite playfellow until he grew so big that it was awkward to have him flopping about the house; he seemed almost heart-broken, poor creature, when they threw him back into the sea, and I believe travelled many miles inland to find his old home again.

“The soft brown fur that ladies are so fond of wearing comes from the Sea-Bear, or Fur-Seal—they are Sea-Lions, too, Val, so you needn’t look so surprised! There were untold numbers of Fur-Seals once both in the North and South Polar regions, but they have been hunted so recklessly for the sake of their skins that now on many parts of the coast where they used to assemble each year in thousands, these animals are almost unknown.

“If you were to meet a baby Sea-Bear, Nancy, you would want to nurse it at once, and I don’t suppose it would mind a bit, for it never enters into its pretty head that anyone would wish to harm it.

SEALS AND WALRUSES

The year we made that trip to the North, Keith and I explored an island in the Arctic Ocean that is famous for its 'rookery,' which is the name that men give to the Seals' special haunt. And here we saw more baby Seals than you could count.

"They didn't take the least notice of us as we crossed the rocks until we came quite close to them, when they looked at us as if asking what we wanted, and seemed almost inclined to play with us. I was wearing a sealskin cap, I remember, with flaps to keep my ears from being frost-bitten. I never cared to wear it after that day, for I had not thought before as to how it had probably been obtained.

"Sea-Bears still gathered on that island in vast herds at certain times of the year. The first to arrive are the fierce males—bull Sea-Bears; these remain on land for weeks at a time without eating or even drinking, in order to guard the places on the shore they have won by fearful fights. After a few days, when they have settled who shall be in front, and who behind, their mates swim in, and are seized upon and kept in order by the 'bulls,' each taking possession of as many as he can get.

"What are the baby Fur-Seals like? Why, the 'cutest little creatures you can imagine, with glossy black coats which don't begin to turn grey, like their fathers' and mothers', until they are three months old. They weigh about three or four pounds at birth, and their bright eyes are wide open. They

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

find their voices almost at once, and bleat like a flock of hungry lambs as they flop about in the deep pools.

“Young Fur-Seals are always born on land, and when their mothers go down to the sea to feed, as they do at regular intervals, they are left behind to mind themselves. The whole lot of them play on the rocks together, the male Seals taking very little notice of them except to dash angrily into their midst if they disturb them, scattering them right and left.

“These ‘bulls,’ which are sometimes six feet long, have four distinct cries—a loud roar of rage or excitement, to which they give vent before seizing a rival with their teeth; a sound that is half growl, half gurgle; a hissing whistle, and a noise that would rather remind you of Milady when she was spitting at Billy just now. Mother-Seals bleat, just as their babies do. Each mother knows her own child by its cry, and singles it out at once, from hundreds of other little Seal pups, when she returns to feed it. When November comes, the young Seals are old enough to swim off to sea with their mothers; the ‘bulls’ have left already, and the rookery is empty until next year. Seals come back to the same spots again and again, and hunters take advantage of this to make raids upon them at certain times of the year. The Seals are quite friendly when the men first land, for they do not dream they intend to harm them.



Sea-Lion

SEALS AND WALRUSES

"Some of the handsomest sealskin that women wear is the soft under-fur of young mother-Sea-Bears; and though laws have been made to protect them during the breeding season, they are often, alas, killed out at sea before their little ones are old enough to feed themselves. What happens then? Well, baby Seals starve to death in thousands, crying for the mothers who never come.

"This is why Fur-Seals are dying out, and every year sealskin becomes more difficult to get."

Nancy was so distressed at the fate of those baby Seals that it was well that Billy suddenly woke up. Milady, soothed by a double allowance of cream, had deigned to return to her usual place on the cushion, ignoring the puppy on Nancy's lap as if he did not exist. And when Billy, refreshed by his long nap, ventured to wag his tail at her, she went so far as to purr.

"Hooray!" cried Val, "they're going to be friends!" And the Grey Man was just as pleased.

"Milady has kept me company so long, that I don't like her to feel hurt," he said. "We mustn't shelve old friends for new ones, eh, Val? I was hoping she would come round."

"What's a Sea-Lion like?" enquired Val thoughtfully, as the North wind whistled down the chimney, and blew flakes of fine snow against the window.

"He's rather larger than the Sea-Bear, though both he and the Hair-Seal belong to the same family

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

of the Eared Seals. His coat is usually reddish or yellowish brown, being composed of long hairs only, without the Sea-Bear's soft under fur. These hairs are particularly long at the back of his neck, and when he 'lollops' across an ice-field, or stands erect, he looks a very imposing gentleman; the 'cow' or female Sea-Lion is very much smaller. Sea-Lions like as many mates as their cousins, the Sea-Bears, do, but the 'true,' or Ear-less, Seals, to which the Common Seal belongs, are supposed to have only one.

"Sea-Lions are hunted on account of their hides, and are found both North and South. A traveller in the Falkland islands, where many Sea-Lions gather in the creeks, tells us how an old male always acts as sentinel, sniffing the air with upraised head as if on the watch for danger. At the slightest alarm the whole herd hurry back to the water, looking very fierce. The Northern Sea-Lion is sometimes thirteen feet long, and can roar quite grandly, though his Californian cousin only barks or howls.

"When surprised on land, a herd is often driven twelve miles or so by the hunters to the nearest village, the 'killing ground'; and since Sea-Lions can't travel nearly so well on shore as Sea-Bears, though their flippers are shaped in much the same way, the journey often takes five days. The biggest are shot, and the rest killed with lances.

"I must'nt forget to tell you that Sea-Lions never drink water, as was proved by one kept in

SEALS AND WALRUSES

captivity for a year. They have also another curious habit—that of swallowing large stones. Numbers of these are found inside them when they are killed.

“The Ear-less Seals include many varieties, one of which is the Common Seal I spoke of awhile ago. Most of them are found in Northern seas, though they swim round the shores of some temperate regions. They love to bask on sunny beaches, but while their young are always born on ice-floes, or on the shore, they don't have regular breeding-places like the Eared Seals, and stay but a short time on land. Oddly enough, their ‘pups’ don't take to the water naturally, but have to be coaxed in by their mothers. Some people think that this helps to show that once upon a time their great-great-great-grandparents, so to say (only ever so much further back), were creatures that lived on land.

“Now, however, all Seals are far more at home in the water. Clumsy as they may seem when you see them flopping over the rocks—and ‘true’ Seals drag their hind legs after them when they are on land, not using them then at all—once in the sea they are very agile and graceful, darting backward and forward as swiftly as the fish, and diving far out of sight. The Killer Whale hunts them whenever he is hungry, and the Polar Bear, as you'll remember, lies in wait for them, too. And sometimes they are crushed to death between floating icebergs, so you see they have many dangers to face.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

“A near relation of Sea-Bears and Sea-Lions is the Walrus, which the Scandinavians christened *valross*—‘Whale Horse.’ He is found only in the Arctic regions, and is hunted for his ivory tusks, his blubber, and his hide, the last being used for harness and for boots and shoes. The fat of his large and unwieldy body yields some 500 lbs. of oil.

“The Walrus is very sociable, and in watching a herd of these beasts upon an ice-floe, you would be amused to notice how closely they press against each other, as if for company. In spite of their huge size—they are even bigger than the Sea-Lions—they are gentle and peace-loving until attacked.

“‘Hunting the Walrus’ is anything but safe. Once he sees that men mean to hurt him, he will fight with the utmost courage, sinking a boat with his fierce onslaught, or tearing his enemy open, if he can get at him, with his powerful tusks.

“The Walrus is hunted with harpoons; and if one of the herd is wounded, the others combine to rescue him in a very human way. More than this—I’m trying to show you, Val, that the ugliest creature ever made is sure to have some good points!—the Walrus mothers have deep affection for their young, which they suckle until they are two years old. What’s that you say, Parkins? ‘The carriage is here?’”

And Nancy and Val had to go.

CHAPTER XI

THE HORSE TRIBE

IT was with the air of a conqueror that Billy, adorned with a fine blue bow, trotted into the library in front of the twins some few days later. With gentle decision he took possession of Milady's cushion, leaving her barely the edge to rest on, and only the gentle wagging of his tail told that he heard the Grey Man's greetings. He seemed pleasantly tired, and went to sleep while Val gave an account of his doings.

"He's the dreadfulest dog," he said, but proudly. "When we went home the other day—the day that we tried to come without him—we found he had eaten the toes off Grandmother's beaded slippers, half a kid glove, and a whole golosh. That's why he didn't want any tea. We'd left him in the schoolroom, with the door shut. But he must have slipped out when Jane went in to see to the fire. He went upstairs to Grandmother's bedroom, and when he'd eaten everything he could, pulled down her eider-down off the bed to lie on. If it hadn't been Christmas time I think she'd have sent him away!"

"And when we went to see the children—who-

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

haven't-any mothers," said Nancy, taking up the story, "he jumped through the kitchen window—we'd left him at home with Cook, so's he'd be safe—and followed the carriage all the way. He came in with us just as quiet as a mouse, and we didn't know he was there till he nearly upset the Christmas tree by fighting a cat hidden under the table!"

"She was sandy, and I don't think he liked the look of her," said Val. "After that he came out, and we scolded him, but the children hugged him like anything. And one little girl who had only just come, and was trying ever so hard not to cry, said, please might she have him to nurse. And—would you believe it—Billy let her kiss him! I think he must have known she was lonesome."

"Very likely!" nodded the Grey Man. "Dogs have a way of guessing things that we should want to be told, and this is what makes them such first-rate companions. Horses are wonderfully sympathetic, too, if we make friends of them. The one I rode when I was in India did all but talk to me, and if I were tired at the end of a long day—it was just before I came home on sick leave—he would pick his steps with the utmost care as he travelled over rough ground, that he might not jolt me. I was almost as fond of him as I was the Pony I had when I was a boy."

"A Pony made us run like anything just now," said Val, his round cheeks dimpling. "It was when



Shetland Pony



THE HORSE TRIBE

we were coming through the lane. I was Son-of-the-Night, a Red Indian, you know, and Nancy was Light-of-Fire, my squaw. I was telling her how Wild White Eagle, my deadly en'my, had hidden himself in ambush near, when something moved behind the hedge, and a jolly little Shetland poked his head through the top of the bushes and neighed. And though we knew it was only a Pony, we started running and didn't stop till we were out of breath!"

"And the Shetland Pony ran too," added Nancy. "He ran so fast that it didn't seem a minute before we saw him on the hill that begins at the end of the field!"

"The Arabs say Horses are 'fleet as the wind,'" said the Grey Man, "while poets always speak of them as being 'winged.' And it was certainly their swiftness that allowed the far-off great-grandfathers of the Horse to escape from the fierce creatures who would have devoured them when they were not much larger than Billy here will be when he's full grown. They had many toes then instead of one, and would look to you entirely different from Horses of the present day. It has taken hundreds of thousands of years for the Horse to grow into the noble animal he is now."

Billy was dozing on the hearthrug, but at this he stirred, and lifted his head. Val was almost sure that he winked!

"You're making fun!" he told the Grey Man. But the Grey Man shook his head.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

“Not at all, Val,” he said gravely. “I’m quite in earnest. There really was, once upon a time, a little animal such as I describe; and in the different layers of the earth’s surface, which are like the pages of a wonder-book, men have been able to trace him through the ages as he gradually grew bigger and stronger, and his many toes were changed into one. It is thought that at first he lived in moist places where the soil is soft, feeding upon juicy vegetables that were easily masticated by his small teeth. As time went on, and he had to run further and further still, and often over hard and rocky ground, to leave his enemies behind, those many toes were in his way. And so, as thousands of years passed by, this horse-like animal came to have but one toe, and that surrounded with horn. He could get about much more quickly with this, and speed was his only way of escaping from his foes.

“When Man first came upon the earth he found the Horse there before him, and no doubt he hunted him for food directly he had learnt to make stone weapons, and to shoot with bows and arrows. The early men who lived in caves drew pictures of Horses of different shapes upon the walls; and very likely the Shetland Pony which you saw this morning had as his far-away great-grandfather the forest Pony of those days gone by.

“‘How did Horses first come to be tamed?’ Well, it’s thought in this way. When a tribe of early men

THE HORSE TRIBE

had surrounded a flying herd, and driven it into some deep gully where none of the Horses could escape, very likely they did not kill all the foals, but took some home to their huts or caves to keep till they grew, and were better worth eating. I should think these captive Horses were fastened by a tough thong of hide to a wooden peg stuck into the ground, so that they might not stray; and perhaps they lit fires around them at night, so that wild beasts would not venture near to carry them off.

“Of course these foals must be fed and watered, and the women and the children of the tribe would have to do this. And don't you think that very soon the children grew fond of the motherless little creatures that looked at them with such liquid eyes, and were so gentle in all their movements? Then the foals, of course, began to love them—love begets love, you know!—and followed them about when they were free, whinnying to be stroked and petted.

“After this, most likely, the children began to ride on their backs in play, and their fathers and mothers looked very wise, and said, ‘We won't eat these young Horses at all, but keep them to carry things for us!’ Once they had discovered how useful to them the Horse could be, they would choose other food in preference to his flesh, considering him too valuable to be killed.

“There are wild Horses still in some parts of the world—splendid creatures who know neither bit nor

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

bridle, and 'fly as the wind flieth, swift and strong.' The most famous of these are the Tarpan of the Russian Steppes, which man has never yet tamed. They are said to be directly descended from the earliest 'true' Horses."

Nancy was very warm and sleepy, and Milady made the softest cushion for her head. She had almost wandered off to Dreamland when she heard Val say, "Another story, please!" and felt wide awake all at once.

"I could tell you dozens about the intelligence of the Horse," the Grey Man answered, "for not even the Dog is more intelligent than he, if kindly treated. His love for his master made him famous far back in ancient history.

"When the King of the Scythians fell in battle, the beautiful Mare he had been riding watched a few paces away from his body, instead of fleeing from the strife and din. According to the custom of those times, an enemy approached the dead King to take away his royal robes; but before he could touch him, the King's Mare had rushed at him, falling upon him with her teeth, and so tearing and rending him that he was quickly slain. Until she was killed no one dare approach her master, and she died beside him.

"Then there was the Horse of another brave warrior—a Horse of such royal beauty and splendour that the King who slew the warrior hero determined to ride the animal himself. He mounted him with

THE HORSE TRIBE

the utmost difficulty, and the Horse, as if knowing that now he bore him who slew his master, was filled with fury. Galloping up the heights of a steep mountain, with a snort of rage, he threw himself and his rider from one of the topmost crags, and both Horse and Man were dashed to pieces on the rocks.

“One of the most touching ‘true stories’ I ever heard was about a thoroughbred Arab Mare belonging to a great Chieftain. This Chieftain was taken prisoner by the men of a rival tribe, torn from his Fleetfoot’s back, and bound with ropes, to be left to lie all night on the hard ground, ‘his stricken face upturned to the dews of heaven.’ The Mare, a very valuable animal, was securely picketed some distance off, and though she restlessly pawed the ground, she made no attempt to escape while she was watched.

“But when her master’s captors were sleeping in their tents, and a drowsy sentinel paced to and fro on the outskirts of the encampment, Fleetfoot broke her bonds, and galloping lightly over the sands, reached the Chieftain’s side. Still moving with the utmost caution, she gnawed through the ropes twisted round his limbs, until presently he was free.

“But they had beaten him before they bound him, and though he tried, he could not raise himself. Then Fleetfoot, seeing his helplessness, fastened her teeth in his clothing, and holding him thus, set out for his home.

“I forget exactly how far it was, but I remember

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

it was amazing to think that a Horse could travel so far at a stretch, and without either food or drink. But at last she arrived at the Chieftain's camp, and laying him gently down on the ground, in the midst of his wondering and thankful friends, fell dead of exhaustion and fatigue. . . ."

"Wasn't that Chieftain ever so sad?" asked Nancy, with such a quiver in her voice that the Grey Man began another story at once—a story with a happy ending.

"Horses show strong affection not only for their masters and for their own kind, but for Dogs and Cats and other creatures who have made friends with them. A carriage Horse took the greatest fancy to a little dog that used to lie in his stall, and the dog was just as fond of him, and always trotted close beside him when he went to drink at a large stone trough at the end of the yard.

"One day, a surly Mastiff, with nothing better to do, took offence at the way the small dog barked, or perhaps at the way in which he carried his tail. Anyhow, he flew at him with such fierceness that the little fellow didn't have a chance, and a minute or two more would have settled him altogether.

"But his friend the Horse was not going to allow this! With a sudden wrench, he broke his halter, and striding to where the Dogs were fighting, knocked the Mastiff off his victim with a well-directed and violent kick. The half-stunned Mastiff

THE HORSE TRIBE

slunk away, and the Horse returned to finish his drink as if nothing at all had happened."

"I think Horses are most awfully nice!" remarked Val. Parkins had brought in the tea-things by now, and the big silver urn was hissing merrily. The Grey Man did not want any tea to-day, so while they tried Cook's ginger snaps, which Milady refused with deep disdain, he told them about Zebras and Wild Asses.

"They belong to the Horse Tribe too, and at one time, most likely, Horses were striped as well as Zebras. We know of an ancient horse-like animal with a red coat spotted with white that lived in South America with early man ; I won't tell you his name, for it's much too long, but some day you'll read for yourselves why the Zebra is said to be so closely related both to the Horse and the Ass. The Quagga, who is counted as a Zebra too, is only striped on his head and body, and is almost as much like a Horse.

"I saw a picture of Zebras once," said Val. "Those stripes of theirs did look so funny! I should think that Lions would see them ever so far away."

"But that's just what Lions don't do, Val, and I'll tell you why. Close at hand, those stripes look quite remarkable, as you say, but at a distance they can't be seen! They become blurred then into a kind of greyish brown, much the colour of the desert sands on which the Zebra lives. The Quagga, who makes his home on the plains of Africa and is growing very

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

scarce, can scarcely be distinguished a short way off either, for his coat blends with his surroundings in the same way.

“This animal gains his name from his cry, ‘*qua ha ha*,’ a shrill, ringing bark, which gives warning to other creatures besides his own kin of the approach of danger. It is quite a common sight in Africa to see a herd of Quaggas feeding beside a flock of Ostriches; the Quaggas have a much keener sense of smell, and can sniff the enemy from afar; while Ostriches, who stand at a great height and can overlook the surrounding country, have their marvellously sharp eyes to warn them. Whether the Quagga and the Ostrich reason this out in some strange way, knowing that there is greater safety for both in each other’s company; or whether they herd together ‘by instinct,’ no one can say! But they make capital partners, for what one lacks, the other has, and a Lion must be very wary to stalk a Quagga if Ostriches are near.

“Mountain Zebras, whose hoofs are much narrower than the Quagga’s, since they often have to find their footing on a very dangerous ledge of rock, are extremely fleet. Each herd, which seldom numbers more than twelve, has its picked sentinel, who keeps watch while the others feed. The faintest rustle in the bushes that he cannot account for, a small puff of dust on the plains below that might mean the hunter’s approach, and his

THE HORSE TRIBE

shrill cry, quite different to the Quagga's, sends them galloping over rocks and crags to the peaks beyond.

"At one time Zebras were declared to be untameable, but that was because no one had had sufficient patience to teach them what was required of them. Within the last few years or so several teams of Zebras have been actually 'broken in' and harnessed to coaches, and even ridden by children. But they are not strong enough for heavy work, and are so nervous and obstinate that it is not likely they will ever be tamed in numbers."

"I'd rather have a Donkey than a Zebra to ride on," Val declared. "There was a jolly little fellow this morning in the same field as the Shetland Pony. He didn't look a bit stupid, and had such a pretty white mark on his forehead."

"I expect that was White Star—he belongs to some tenants of mine who make a regular pet of him. He must be quite an old Donkey now, though you call him 'a jolly little fellow,' for it is years since I heard of his doings, and he was old enough to be ridden even then.

"White Star was very fond of company, and was extremely annoyed when for some reason or other they put him out to grass in a field by himself, instead of, as usual, in the long meadow, in company with several motherly cows who seemed much amused at his antics.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

“‘What! stay here all alone? Not if I know it!’ he must have thought; for though the long meadow was several fields away from the field in which he was now, a little while later he was frisking about with his old friends, his ears cocked knowingly, as if to say: ‘You thought you had me, didn’t you?’

“All the gates between his prison and the long meadow were found to be open, but the farmer did not think it possible that White Star could have unfastened these himself, and blamed his men.

“But when next day, too, White Star was found to have joined the cows, a watch was kept on him. Back to his own field for awhile he contentedly munched the grass, glancing occasionally from side to side to see if he were observed. At last, when he fancied the coast was clear, he trotted gaily up to the gate, gently wriggled his head between the bars, and lifted the latch with his mouth! Then he drew back his head, took another look round, and repeated the same performance with the next gate that came in his way. It really was very clever of him; but Donkeys have plenty of brains.”

“I shall tell young Taylor that,” said Val. “When I can’t do fractions—I think they’re horrid!—he says I’m ‘as stupid as a Donkey.’ And I think that’s stupid of *him*.”

“So it is,” said the Grey Man warmly. “Donkeys wouldn’t be stupid at all if people knew how to deal

THE HORSE TRIBE

with them. The African Wild Ass, from which many of our domesticated Donkeys are probably descended, is quite a beautiful creature, swift and graceful in all his movements, and holding his head up like a King. Donkeys originally belonged to warm desert regions, where it is hotter all the year round than it ever is with us, except now and then in the height of the summer: and this is why their present-day descendants can't stand the cold and damp of our climate so well as Horses, who come of a hardier race. And since Donkeys are generally half-starved, and more ill-treated, perhaps, than any other animal, it isn't surprising that the poor things seem 'stupid,' and are puny and dejected instead of strong and handsome! A well-fed and well-cared-for Donkey, such as White Star, is often strikingly clever, and has a wonderful memory. 'Are Donkey's really obstinate?' Well, we'll call it strong-willed! White Star likes his own way, and doesn't see why he shouldn't have it; but kindness will always influence him much more lastingly than blows. In Spain and Egypt, where they are greatly valued, you would not know some of the Donkeys for the same animals as the Coster's piteous drudges."

"What do Wild Asses eat?" asked Val. He thought that tea was much later than usual, and had been listening for the last ten minutes for the welcome rattle of cups and saucers.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

“All green things, I should think, that come their way. Luckily for them, since most of the plants that grow on the borders of the desert are tough and prickly, the lining of Asses’ mouths is very different from that of ours. If White Star were to yawn in your face, or even opened his mouth to bray, you would see that it was covered inside with very tough skin with horny scales running all across it. This is how Nature has helped him to crush his food; if the skin inside his mouth were soft and tender, he would have to starve! The African Wild Ass would probably enjoy a thistle as much as anything you could give him, though a Horse couldn’t swallow it if he tried. We can generally tell by looking at an animal’s mouth and teeth just what sort of food he eats.

“Asia, as well as Africa, is famous for Wild Asses. The Asiatic ones have shorter and narrower ears, and their coats are sandy or reddish instead of grey or dun-coloured. It is from ‘dun’ that our Donkey is supposed to have taken his name, ‘don-key’ meaning ‘little grey one.’

“The Kiang is the largest of the Asiatic Wild Asses. He lives in mountain ranges north of the Himalayas, feeding on the vast tablelands in small troops, guarded, like the Quaggas, by a sentinel. The Kiang chosen for this post keeps a careful watch on the surrounding company, and gives a signal instantly should he suspect even the rustling of the wind. Kiangs swim splendidly, and always

THE HORSE TRIBE

make their homes in the neighbourhood of water. This is most unlike their cousins in Africa, who dislike crossing even a shallow stream as much as our own Donkeys do; and Mules are just as bad. I have seen one stand for half-an-hour on the verge of a narrow river before he could be coaxed to cross a bridge. It said much for his master that he crossed it at all, for a Mule is twice as 'firm' as a Donkey.

“‘What is a Mule?’ Why, a cross between a Horse and an Ass. He has his mother's ears and his mother's obstinacy, and is very strong and can climb like a goat! In countries where men have to carry their merchandise over tracts of mountain land in order to dispose of it in other countries, they couldn't get on at all without Mules. These sagacious animals are curiously sure-footed, and if left to themselves will bear their owners in safety over narrow ledges of rock where it wouldn't seem possible that they could find room for their hoofs! At one time, I believe, Mules were actually employed to draw our London Tram Cars, but they're seldom seen in England now.”

CHAPTER XII

"MY LORD THE ELEPHANT"

THERE was plenty of time after tea for another talk about animals, and as Val's eyes fell on an ivory tusk in which was set a tiny thermometer, he suddenly bethought him of the Elephant.

"I saw one once in a Menagerie," he said. "He did look so grand, and his keeper called him 'my lord.' His voice was so loud that it frightened me—I was quite little then, you know."

"'My lord' is not a bad name for him, for he is the largest land animal living now on the earth. He looks even grander when trumpeting through the forests of his native land than when decked with gems, and trappings of gold and silver, to take part in the state processions of Indian Princes. He is singled out from all other beasts by being the only one with a real trunk; and his trunk, to me, is by far the most wonderful thing about him.

"How he came to have this long muscular nose, with nostrils at the end through which he can sniff the faintest scent of danger brought to him by the wind, is a story that goes back thousands upon

MY LORD THE ELEPHANT

thousands of years ago, for the earliest 'Elephant-like' creature known had nothing of the kind, and rather resembled a large Pig! You will find it quite as interesting to read about these old-time Elephants, Val, as you will about old-time Horses; but you must wait a little while first, until long words don't make you sigh so!

"There is scarcely anything that the Elephant cannot do with his trunk, which is like a hand to him, and so extremely sensitive at its tip that he uses it to feel with just as we use the tips of our fingers. When he wants to drink, he need neither bend his head nor stir a limb; he merely dips the end of that trunk into a stream or pond, and filling it with a deep breath, tucks it into his mouth, and squirts the sweet, cool water down his throat. If he is left to mind his Mahout's baby, as often happens in India, he can move the tiny thing with it out of harm's way as easily as he can pull down a tree or gather a bunch of grass; and knowing how useful it is to him, he takes the greatest care of it. He never, for instance, uses it to move heavy weights, and in dragging roped timber he always holds the rope between his teeth. If he has a light log of wood in his charge, he carries this in his mouth, just as a dog would, balancing it now and then with his trunk if it seems inclined to slip. Except when under some particularly strong excitement, when perhaps he forgets to protect it, he curls his trunk tightly up for safety in

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

making a rush at his enemy. A fight between Elephants is a terrible sight to witness, for their fury is very great.

“Another wonderful thing about the Elephant is his enormous head. His brain is not much in point of size, though it has so large a body to govern; but it has many twists and turns, which wise men say makes up for this. The whole of the upper part of his skull is composed of honey-combed cells, or air chambers, to which are attached the muscles of his great jaws; if this part of his skull were solid, its weight would be so great that very likely he couldn't hold up his head! This has to be very large, you see, in order to support his trunk; and so Nature cleverly makes it very light as well as very strong.

“The Elephant of to-day has still the five toes of his Pig-like ancestor, but these are enclosed in a common hoof, with a sole that is like a thick, soft cushion. If it were not for this his enormous weight would jar the bones of his feet as he put them to the ground. The position of his toes is shown by broad flat nails, though sometimes an Elephant's hind foot has three or four nails instead of five.

“Some day you'll hear about an Elephant called the Mammoth, one of those ancient beasts that lived in this land in the early days of man. We know exactly what he was like, for not only have many of his bones been dug up in caves and river beds in

MY LORD THE ELEPHANT

England, but away in Siberia, where he was once very common, his immense body has been found frozen hard in ice! One of these huge carcasses was discovered on the banks of the river Lena about a hundred and fifteen years ago. A native first noticed a solid, dark mass in a bank of ice, and two years later, during a very hot summer, a tusk peeped out. Then, as more ice melted, a whole side of the great beast was revealed, and people came from near and far to look at him. Even his eyes and his trunk had been preserved in this way; and his flesh, covered over with woolly hair, was actually eaten by native dogs when the melting ice allowed them to get at it. The natives hacked it off and ate it too, just as early men did that of other Mammoths many thousands of years ago!

“‘Hunting the Mammoth’ was great sport in those days, and when, as very often happened, one of these huge animals, having stumbled into a bog, was unable to struggle out again because his own weight kept pressing him further down, the hungry Cave-man who heard his cries called his tribe to surround and slay him with their stone knives and spears. Then they hacked him to bits, and dragged him out, feasting upon him round their fires for many a night to come! His fat gave them oil, and his tusks were treasured as trophies. Pictures were sometimes drawn upon these when the Cave-men began to wish to show others what

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

they had seen themselves, and some of the earliest drawings known to us have been found on the tusks and horns of animals buried under the floors of caves."

"Did *you* ever hunt an Elephant?" asked Val. The Grey Man shook his head.

"Not exactly, boy, for though I once watched an Elephant hunt in India I took no part in it. A herd of these beasts was driven into an enclosed circle, or 'Kheddah,' as hunters call the open space surrounded by a strong fence. Once the Elephants were inside this, and its entrance closed, the natives rode in among them on Elephants which were already tamed, and by throwing loops of rope round the feet of their captives, succeeded in 'hobbling' them. Each struggling prisoner was then led off in turn between two tame Elephants, to be kept in another enclosure until he became 'tame' himself. 'Taming' an Elephant does not take long; his 'Mahout,' or driver, talks to him and pets him, rewarding him with sugar cane when he is obedient, and giving him plenty of the food that he likes best. Kindness soon conquers an Elephant, just as it does a human being; and these great creatures become extremely docile in a short time.

"The Indian Elephant is a valuable friend to man, quite apart from the value of his ivory tusks, or the use that is made of him in Tiger-hunting. When an engineer in India plans a splendid bridge,

MY LORD THE ELEPHANT

it is Elephants who drag the timber down to the river's bank for him, and stack the great wooden piles exactly where he wishes them to be. In war-time Elephants carry heavy baggage from camp to camp, transporting artillery over rugged roads on which no other animal can travel. And they are so patient, and so intelligent up to a certain point, that it is easy for men to make them do as they wish.

"Sometimes an elephant's instinct is wiser than man's judgment, as when he refuses to go over a bridge which he knows is not firm enough to bear his weight. No coaxing or threatening will induce him to cross it until it has been strengthened, though then he goes without any fuss."

"What was that you said the other day about Elephants hunting Tigers?" enquired Val, who liked to hear about hunts and battles better than anything else.

"They don't do this of their own accord, Val, for they have naturally a great terror of these savage beasts. If an Elephant sniffs a Tiger in the jungle, he gives the alarm to his companions by blowing shrilly through his trunk, and tapping the end of it sharply on the ground. An Elephant who is 'fear-proof' to a Tiger is worth a large sum, since in some parts of India, where the jungle is very thick, the only way in which the Tiger can be hunted without great risk to life is by his help. Training an

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

Elephant not to run when he smells Tiger is a long and tedious business; dead bodies of Tigers are first procured, and he is induced to charge at these and trample on them, so that he may think that his instinct has been at fault, and that Tigers won't hurt him after all. When he has thus got over his first horror of Tiger-scent, he is further trained by being made to run at dummy Tigers, until at last he becomes so used to the sight of them that it is considered safe for hunters to ride into the jungle perched up high in the howdah, or seat, on his back. But, even so, he sometimes turns tail when a Tiger, tracked to his lair, rushes out to attack his foes, and the chances are that the 'howdah' will then be dashed against a tree, and the hunters flung to the ground before they get a chance to shoot.

"It is seldom, except when conquered by fear, that an Elephant disobeys his master. Some one who studied animals all his life declared that Elephants possess the power of reasoning as well as instinct, so that when anything happens to him which hasn't happened before, he uses his wits to find out what to do. This same man told us how a tethered Elephant was seen to get possession of a potato which had fallen out of his reach by blowing it *away* from him against the opposite wall, so that it might rebound, and come back nearer. Clever of him, wasn't it? But no one who has seen much of Elephants would be surprised.

MY LORD THE ELEPHANT

“A very favourite ‘true story’ about the Elephant tells of a poor animal that had gone blind from some disease in his eyes. His master was very sorry for him, and asked a great friend of his if he could not do something to cure him.

“‘I’ll try,’ said the kind doctor; and the blind Elephant was made to lie down in order that he might put some drops into one of his eyes, just as he would have done to a human being suffering from the same disease. The drops hurt dreadfully, and the Elephant roared with pain. But this actually restored the sight to that particular eye, and next day the Elephant found that he could see once more.

“The following morning he was brought out to have the other eye attended to in the same way, and, to the amazement of his keeper, when he heard the doctor’s voice he lay down of his own accord, placed his head quietly on one side, curled up his trunk, drew in his breath like a human being about to endure a painful operation, sighed with relief when it was over, and then, by motions of his trunk and other gestures, gave evident signs of wishing to express his gratitude.

“Another story of an Elephant’s reasoning powers, almost more striking still, is that of a mother-elephant in the last Indian war, who, groaning with sympathy all the while, held her young one down with her trunk, day after day, until he was cured, while the surgeon dressed the deep

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

wound in his head which he had received in action. Elephants were often taken to battle in days gone by. In the Carthaginian wars the Romans were terrified when they first beheld them in battle array ; but when they found that they stampeded if lighted torches were waved before their eyes, they were less alarmed.

“The African Elephant, the only other kind now inhabiting the world, was once also trained for use in war, but now is hunted only for his ivory. His tusks are ever-growing, enormous teeth, each sometimes weighing as much as 300 pounds, and so many African Elephants have been killed of late years for the sake of these, that it is feared that if men don't stop hunting them there will soon be none left.

“They are rather larger than those of India, while their ears are longer and broader, and their foreheads of quite another shape. Their teeth are also somewhat different, and their trunks look as if they had been made in separate pieces, and then fitted carefully together. They do not mind the fierce rays of the sun as Indian Elephants do, and like harder and rougher food, though they are particularly fond of the juicy boughs of sweet-scented yellow mimosa. It used to be said that they were untameable, but this was certainly wrong. There's a very fine African Elephant at the Zoological Gardens to-day who is the particular friend of most

MY LORD THE ELEPHANT

of the children who go there; and if you saw them riding on his back you would know how tame he is!"

"Tell me what Elephants do when they're free!" urged Nancy.

"Ah! they have very good times then! In the cool of the early morning and late afternoon they roam in herds through the leafy groves, waking soon after dawn to feed on the tender shoots of young bamboos, and the leaves of palm and fig trees. The Indian Elephants, of which I am speaking now, keep to the shadiest depths of the jungle when summer is at its height, for they do not like too much heat; and if by chance they are exposed directly to the sun's rays, they most ingeniously thatch their backs in order to protect themselves, breaking off branches with their trunks, and filling in the crevices between the leaves with dust by throwing this up by means of their trunks. If the flies bother them, they break off other leafy boughs for fans, waving them languidly to and fro just as Nancy will wave hers some day when she wears long dresses and plaits her hair.

"These Elephants are splendid swimmers, and bathing is one of their favourite occupations. They like to roll in wet mud, too, when their skins are dry and uncomfortable; and I expect the days pass as quickly with them as they do with us if we're busy.

"When all is well, and there seems no need for caution, the mothers and young ones saunter on in front of the herd, which is usually a family party.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

The males follow leisurely, stopping now and then to grunt or trumpet, or to pluck some specially tempting leaves.

“But if they sniff the dreaded Tiger, or danger threatens from any other cause, the mothers and babies are bundled behind in no time, and the males take their stand in front to protect them! If driven to bay, an Elephant will sometimes charge a Tiger, pinning him down on the point of a tusk, and then flinging him thirty feet off! Unless the Tiger’s back is broken, he will try to stagger to his feet, when another member of the herd will rush at him, and most likely trample him to death.

“When the season has been very dry, and there is difficulty in finding food and water, a large herd of Elephants often breaks up into several small ones. But they never go far from each other, and when the rains come, and the plains are green once more, they gather together to take the young ones to feed on the new grass, which seems to spring up like magic.

“The mother Elephants squeak with pleasure as they watch their babies enjoying themselves. This funny low sound is made through their trunks, an Elephant’s ordinary cry being either the shrill trumpeting we know so well, or a roar from the throat if hurt or frightened. The calf calls its mother by a queer little rumbling sound, and you may be sure that she comes to it as quickly as she can.

MY LORD THE ELEPHANT

“An Elephant mother is devoted to her little one. If a deep river has to be forded, she will carry it on her back, or guide it carefully with her trunk, making the fondest little noises to encourage it to go on. An Elephant bears young more slowly than any animal known, and is generally thirty years old before she has her first baby. Young Elephants are seldom born in captivity, but a baby one in an American menagerie weighted 245 lbs., and was the size of a mountain sheep. For six months it fed only on milk; then it began to eat grass just as its mother did, and grew very fond of its keeper.

“Elephant-life is not always peaceful, even in the wilds. Full-grown males, as I told you, have desperate fights with each other, and sometimes an Elephant is turned out of the herd, and never allowed to come back to it again. No other herd will have him, and this is a fearful punishment, for the Elephant is extremely sociable. The exile becomes what the Indians call a ‘rogue’—a dangerous beast whose one object seems to kill and destroy. The Ancients declared that Elephants must have two hearts, for they could not understand otherwise how such a gentle creature could become so vicious.”

“Tell us another story,” entreated Val. But someone had come to fetch them home—it was actually almost bedtime!

CHAPTER XIII

THE PIG TRIBE

THE twins were late next time they came —so late that the Grey Man had almost left off expecting them, and Cook was quite cross to think that the little pink cakes she had made would be wasted. But they arrived at last, Val carrying Billy most carefully in his arms, scolding and comforting him in the same breath.

“He *would* go after some little black pigs,” said Nancy, almost tearfully, “and the mother-pig chased him, and knocked him over, and rolled him in the ditch. She must have hurt him ever so, for he cried and cried.”

“It was his own fault,” said Val, trying to be very stern as he laid Billy down beside Milady. The beautiful cat understood at once that Billy had been in the wars, and licked him by way of showing her sympathy. Billy didn’t much like being licked, and wriggled; but wriggling wasn’t comfortable to him just then, and Milady found the opportunity for which she had long been waiting of smoothing down his wiry hair.

THE PIG TRIBE

"I shouldn't have thought a Pig could be so fierce," said Nancy with a deep sigh.

"You would not say that if you'd seen a Wild Boar, a very well-known member of the Pig Tribe. Long ago he lived in our British woods, making his den in a tangle of briars, or in some natural cave. Boar hunting was a favourite sport in those days, and a dangerous one, too. The savage creature was chased through the forest by a pack of Hounds, followed by men on horseback. When at last he was driven to bay, and surrounded by the yelping Dogs, one of the hunters sprang from his Horse to 'finish him off' with a short spear. If he missed his aim, he was very likely to lose his life, for the tusks of a Wild Boar are terrible weapons. They can rip open a Dog in no time, and often at the end of a hunt few of the Hounds were unwounded. Should a Tiger attack him, it is often the Tiger that comes off worst! There's a story which tells of a Wild Boar that killed a Camel. Wild Swine—that is, Wild Pigs!—live in many parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia to-day, and 'Pig-sticking,' as hunting them is called in India, is still a favourite sport.

"Wild Boars are the males, and an old one often lives by himself, hiding in the forest during the day time, and coming out to look for food at night and in the early mornings. The females and the young run in droves, and sometimes destroy

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

whole fields of grain by turning the earth over their snouts as they search for roots. I once surprised a Bearded Swine in Borneo who had just laid waste a native's garden, to which he had found his way through a hole in the fence. He seemed to be enjoying himself immensely, but made off at once when he saw me coming. It was in another island off the Malay Peninsula that I caught sight of the Babirusa, which is also a member of the Pig family. So far as his body is concerned, he is rather like an ordinary Pig with very long limbs; but his head appears quite extraordinary. If he happens to be an old male, his enormous tusks pierce the skin of his face, giving him a most ferocious look. They seemed to me like the horns of a Deer growing in the wrong place, and this must have struck the Malays, too, for his name really means 'Pig-Deer.'

"While we are talking about the Pig family, I mustn't leave out the Wart Hog, which is a native of Africa. The Red River Hog lives there, also, and he is the best-looking Pig in the world, while the Wart Hog is surely the ugliest! His body is nearly naked, but he has a thick mane on his neck and back of long bristly hair, and a tuft of the same at the tip of his tail. His face is very broad and flat, and beneath each of his eyes is a huge lump, or wart, with smaller warts between his eyes and his huge tusks.

"The only Swine in America are those fierce

THE PIG TRIBE

little Peccaries of which the Jaguar is so fond. There are two kinds of these—the Collared Peccaries, which are not unlike the small black Pigs that Billy chased, only with more slender limbs and a yellowish white stripe running from their shoulders across their chests; and the White-lipped Peccaries, which are rather bigger. These last collect in such large droves that travellers passing through the forests often think it wisest to keep well out of their way!”

“When I once went to the Zoo with Daddy,” remarked Val dreamily, blinking at the fire, “he showed me a great black animal that I thought was a funny, enormous Pig. I’ve ’most forgotten all I saw—I was quite little then, you know; but this big black thing had a pond at the back of its cage, out in the open air. And it hid in the water, all but its head, with two little eyes on the top. When it opened its mouth at me afterwards, it was horrid.”

“You mean the Hippopotamus,” said the Grey Man. “He is one of the largest animals we know of, his body being only slightly smaller than that of the Elephant. And he *would* make one think of a giant Pig if he had a snout, for his skull is certainly very Pig-like. But he is much more heavily built, and has shorter legs in comparison.

“He’s called the Hippopotamus because he stays so long in the water, this word meaning ‘River-Horse’ in the Greek. The name of the Ancient

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

Egyptians for him meant 'River-Swine,' which suited him better still.

"I am not surprised that you didn't admire him when he opened his huge red cavern of a mouth, Val. But his stomach is nearly eleven feet long, so it's not to be wondered at that he needs big jaws to chop up enough food to fill it for him. His appetite is simply enormous, and he can store away some five or six bushels of food at a time.

"Fortunately for the smaller creatures in the neighbourhood of the lakes and rivers where he makes his home—he is only found now in Africa, though in other days a very large Hippopotamus was known in Europe, and actually lived in England!—he feeds only on green things and seeds, and grain and sugar cane if he can get them. All day long he dozes in the water, often only the flat top of his head, with his ears and nostrils, being visible above the surface, just like the beast you saw. Sometimes he prefers to sleep on a marshy bank, hidden by the tall reeds, but wherever he is, he begins to grow hungry as twilight falls, and grunts and snorts as he thinks of supper.

"Sometimes he's content with water plants, dragging them to the surface to munch at his ease; and when he does this, he is really useful, for he prevents the stream from being choked with weeds. But now and again he grows tired of these, and if the land near the river is cultivated, he makes for the nearest plantation he knows of on the approach of night.

THE PIG TRIBE

“Hippopotamuses usually go about in herds, thirty to forty strong, and the amount of damage they can do to rice and sugar crops between sunset and dawn would be astonishing if we did not remember these animals' great size. They are guided in the darkness entirely by their sense of smell, and if rain comes on while they are still some distance from their lake or river homes, they have great difficulty in finding their way back. When this happens, the natives sometimes kill them with very sharp poisoned spears, but as a rule they are caught in pits which have been dug beforehand in their tracks. In the water they are chased by men in canoes, to be either harpooned or shot. ‘What do they want to kill them for?’ To eat, for one thing. Just beneath the skin of a Hippopotamus there's a layer of fat that the natives think delicious. They call it ‘*Zee-hoe Spock*’—Lake-cow Bacon—at the Cape. His feet are stewed into jelly, and his tongue is greatly relished at feasts. Then those great sharp teeth of his, which are always growing, and can cut grass clean off like a scythe, are excellent ivory, while his hide makes first-rate whips. It is also used on revolving wheels for polishing steel, its great toughness making it stand wear and tear in quite a wonderful way.

“Hunting the Hippopotamus is most exciting, especially if he is in the water. Though timid by nature and inoffensive towards man, like some other timid beasts he defends himself fiercely, and frequently

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

over-turns a boat by diving deep down and attacking it from underneath. Sometimes when travellers are sailing up a river they suddenly run into a big herd of these beasts, the heads of which look merely like dark masses of wood or floating timber until they come quite close to them. If even one Hippopotamus should charge them, they are lucky if they escape with their lives."

"The Hippopotamus *I* saw," remarked Val, quite proud of being able to say his long name, "went right under the water when he shut his mouth, and didn't come up for ever so long! And I shouldn't have minded if he had been drowned. He *was* so ugly."

"He wouldn't be 'drowned,' for if he likes he can stay under water from five to ten minutes before he comes up to breathe. Baby Hippopotamuses, which ride under water on their mother's backs, must come up more often, and their mothers always remember this. They are as fond of their young as Billy's mother was of him, and fly into terrible rages if any-one tries to molest them. Their voices then are like the creaking of some great door, and though they spend so much time in lakes or rivers, they can gallop very quickly when pursuing an enemy on land.

"Young Hippopotamuses are playful little creatures, and I heard of one while I was in Africa that had been carried off by a kindly planter, when its mother was killed, and kept in a barn and fed. It grew quite tame, and wanted to follow him into the



Wild Boar



Hippopotamuses

THE PIG TRIBE

house, grunting with pleasure when he came near, and trying to show how fond he was of him. So you see that in spite of being so ugly, a Hippopotamus is grateful when people are good to him !

“The Pigmy, or Dwarf, Hippopotamus of West Africa, is the only other animal of the kind that we know of to-day. He is about the size of a Pig, and very like him, with much the same habits. Instead of living almost entirely in the water, he haunts the depths of the wood, and rolls in wet mud, just as a Pig does, to keep himself cool and clean ! The natives think him very good to eat, but they find him most difficult to catch. The faintest whiff of them sends him flying, for his sense of smell is extremely strong, and he can tell at once if they have been anywhere near. So he’s seldom seen, even in his native wilds, and we know very little about him.

“There’s another beast you would call ‘ugly,’ and no doubt you saw him that same day at the Zoo, Val. He doesn’t belong to the Hippopotamus family at all, though his body is of the same clumsy build, and his skin of the same dark colour. You are quite right—he *has* ‘a horn on his nose,’ and his ears ‘stand up straight,’ as you say, from the very back of his head. His name is the Rhinoceros, and though he has quite died out in America, he is found both in Africa and India. It must have been the Indian Rhinoceros you saw, since this one has only one horn, while the African Rhinoceros has two. Our friend in India

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

falls back on his tusks to help him to defeat his foes, ripping them open with the sharp points. Even an Elephant gets badly mauled when attacked by him, and likes the job of hunting him only a trifle less than hunting the Tiger.

“A whole line of Elephants sometimes take part in a Rhinoceros hunt, the men who ride them being ready to shoot at a moment’s notice when the infuriated animal ‘breaks his cover’—that is, when he is driven out into the open by the natives taking part in the hunt, who beat drums and make fearful noises to induce him to quit his lair. He is hunted sometimes for sport, or for the sake of his tough hide or horns; but in days gone by men hunted him because he was good to eat! His half-charred bones have been found buried under the floors of caves beside those of ancient men who must have lived in our British Islands thousands of years ago, and many remains of him have been discovered beneath the banks of the river Thames. This old Rhinoceros had a woolly coat, and was much larger than any of his kindred we know now. His horn was often five feet long, and the Cave-men sometimes drew pictures upon this, just as they did upon the tusks of Elephants and the horns of Reindeer.

“There’s a White, or Square-mouthed, Rhinoceros living in Africa to-day, whose flesh, which tastes rather like beef, is thought delicious by the natives of that land. They cut off his hump when they succeed in

THE PIG TRIBE

capturing him, and roast it in its skin, making a rude oven out of a hole in the ground. When it is cooked, they have a great feast, just as the Cave-men did. The White Rhinoceros—who isn't really 'white' at all, but a pale, dingy grey—is a very large and ungainly beast, with a second horn that is sometimes only a little stump. He runs with his head very close to the ground, his nose almost touching it; and if alarmed while browsing on a plain, he gallops off at a great pace."

"What sort of things does a Rhinoceros eat?" asked Val.

"Small boughs and leaves, but chiefly grass. The Black African Rhinoceros, who haunts the steep sides of the wooded hills instead of swamps and plains, eats young trees also. If you saw him beside an Indian Rhinoceros you would notice a great deal of difference between them; the African has two horns instead of one, with a much more pointed and flexible lip, but no lower tusks. He is smaller, too, and the great folds of skin on his Indian cousin are missing on him. The smallest of all living Rhinoceroses is a hairy little fellow in Sumatra. He has two horns, and these are eagerly bought by the Chinese, who think that if ground into powder and swallowed they will cure diseases."

"Just fancy!" cried Val, wrinkling up his nose. But his frown soon changed into a wide smile, for Parkins brought in the silver tray, and Cook's little cakes, all glistening with sugar icing, caught his eye at once.

CHAPTER XIV

"A QUEER-LOOKING BEAST"

VAL had been wandering round the hall, for Billy was sure that a big Rat lurked in a shadowy corner guarded by what looked like an old-time knight in a suit of armour, and firmly refused to enter the study until he had satisfied his mind. So Val stayed too, to see that he didn't get into mischief, and made discoveries on his own account.

One was the head of a very fine Jaguar, whose gleaming glass eyes startled him with their fierce expression as they glared at him through the dusk. It hung side by side with the head of "a queer-looking beast" Val did not know by sight—an animal with a long snout, and a curiously-shaped head set off at the back with a stiff brush of hair.

"I wonder what your name is!" Val remarked, glad to withdraw his gaze from the fierce Jaguar; and, Billy having at last determined to give up the Rat as a bad job, he hurried into the warm study to make enquiries.

"That's the head of a Tapir," said the Grey Man, who had been "talking secrets" with Nancy.

A QUEER-LOOKING BEAST

"You're right—he *is* 'a queer-looking beast,' and he's probably one of the oldest animals in the world. His bones have been found 'way down under the earth in many parts of Europe, including England, and in China also, though now he is only met with in Central and South America, and one special kind of him in the Malay Peninsula.

"That Tapir whose head you saw in the hall came from Brazil, and the Jaguar beside him was his deadliest enemy. 'Did the Jaguar kill him?' No! he killed the Jaguar! And that's what I'm going to tell you about.

"The Tapir, you must know, is a very shy and retiring beast, with a thick, smooth skin covered with thin, short hairs, a somewhat clumsily-built body, four toes on each front foot, and three on each hind foot, each set of toes being encased in a long and rather oval hoof. At the end of his muzzle—and this is what makes him so peculiar—he has a long snout, as you saw, and his nostrils are placed at the very end of this. His teeth, though very interesting to clever men, are not particularly strong or big, and you would not think for a moment that he'd have the ghost of a chance in defending himself against such a powerful brute as the Jaguar. But Nature has taught him what to do when the Jaguar springs upon him, and to this wise instinct many a Tapir owes his life.

"I was with a hunting-party in Brazil when I saw

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

a Tapir for the first and only time. We were after a Jaguar known in the district by a native name meaning 'Cruel-as-Death,' and as twilight came on we were preparing to camp beside a deep stream when we heard a sudden uproar in the darkness. It was echoed, I should fancy, by every wood-thing within hearing distance; Birds shrieked and Monkeys chattered, while the shrill sharp cries of the Peccaries added to the babel.

"'There's a Jaguar near!' cried one of the older men; and as he spoke there burst through the bushes in front of us a Tapir about the size of a Donkey, with a Jaguar on his back!

"The Jaguar was Cruel-as-Death—we knew him by the peculiar markings of his red-gold coat, which had been fully described to us. Before we had time to shoot, the agonised Tapir dashed into the centre of the stream and dived.

"What happened under the water we could not tell—most likely the Jaguar released his hold, and the Tapir, who is a famous diver and can stay below for a considerable time, got on the top of him. We could see from the surging of the waters against the banks that a terrible struggle was going on; and when Cruel-as-Death floated up to the surface he was quite dead.

"Having drowned his enemy, the Tapir scrambled back on to dry land, whistling—his only cry. In another moment he would have made his way back

A QUEER-LOOKING BEAST

to the heart of the undergrowth, but one of our men, who forgot what was due to his gallant fight, shot him down as he ran, and killed him.

"And that's how his head is beside the head of Cruel-as-Death, whose body we soon dragged out of the water, feeling thoroughly disappointed to have had no hunt after all."

"I shall be a hunter when I grow up," said Val. "But I shall only kill things like Jaguars, and Lions and Tigers—fierce beasts, you know. I shouldn't kill Tapirs at all."

"You might if you happened to have a plantation of sugar-canes, or cacao (chocolate) trees, and you found your young plants all trampled to the ground after a midnight raid of these hungry creatures! Tapirs content themselves, as a rule, with leaves and fallen fruit, or perhaps swamp grasses and water plants; but sometimes a herd leaves the depths of the forest in the dark to devour and destroy to such an extent that the planters are almost ruined. It is then they go out to hunt the Tapir, tracking him to his distant lair by the regular paths he makes for himself through the brushwood. His hide is so thick that he can force his way where no other animal in the forest can; and if a Jaguar should attack him when he happens to be further than usual from the water—he seldom wanders far out of its reach—he often manages to get rid of him by dashing through dense thorn bushes. The thorns run into the Jaguar's flesh, and

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

pierce his eyes ; and rather than have these torn out of his head, he scrambles down off the Tapir's back, and, snarling, returns to the trees.

“ You'll remember, Nancy, that I told you just now how the hide of the Tapir is covered with thin short hair. When he's grown up, this hair is usually the colour of his skin, but baby Tapirs are always striped or spotted with white. Their mothers, of course, are extremely fond of them, and if anything happens to her young one, a mother Tapir loses all her timidity and gentleness, and is ready to fight anyone or anything she comes across. At such times she has been known to knock down quite a large animal, or even a man, attacking her foe most savagely with her teeth, and kicking and trampling with her strong hoofs.

“ I was as surprised as you will be to hear how friendly Tapirs become when taken captive and kindly treated. A baby Tapir is a most amusing pet, but like most other wild things, he soon grows too big to have in the house, so his master must either lose him in the forest, or kill and eat him. Natives have a great weakness for his flesh, and hunt him for this as well as for his hide, which they use for many purposes.

“ The Malay Tapir is even more curious to look at than his American brother, for not only is his snout longer—he is a bigger animal altogether—but while part of his skin is a rich, deep black, his back, ears, and sides are pure white. His little ones, however,

A QUEER-LOOKING BEAST

are very dark brown, spotted or striped with yellow like those of the American Tapir. Their colour changes when they are about five to six months old.

“The Malays are very fond of animals, and they occasionally take a young Tapir into their huts and bring him up with the children. They say that he will eat almost anything then—pieces of wood, and clay and stones, having been found inside tame Tapirs when these were killed.

“Once upon a time—this is a story a Parrot told me, as I dozed one day under a leafy tree in Brazil—a Magician went through the forest saying that to any creature who could show good cause why he should have it, he would give a stone which would make him more strong and powerful than any other animal in the world. A Leopard, a Tiger, a Panther, and a large Wild Cat immediately sprang from the bushes to demand his gift, arguing their respective claims so loudly that none of them could be understood.

“‘Softly, softly!’ cried the Magician, lifting his hands to his ears. But the eager animals only clamoured the more, until, in disgust, he withdrew still further into the forest in order to escape their noise.

“Here he met a gentle and solitary Tapir, who had learned from the wind of his generous offer, and humbly asked that the gift might be his.

“‘I have no claws,’ he pleaded anxiously, ‘and my flesh is so sweet that many desire me. If your gift

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

makes me strong and powerful, as you promise, I shall be content to defend myself and live in peace. My food is the fruit of the green earth ; I seek not to prey on living thing.'

" 'It is well !' replied the Magician. And he laid the brown stone at the Tapir's feet, and went his way. But before the Tapir could pick it up, a mischievous Gibbon stretched out his arm and snatched it from him, bearing it off to a tall mountain where lived the King of the Apes. Disbelieving the Gibbon's story, the Ape King flung the brown stone into the sea, where a fish gulped it down and became the Whale.

" But to this very day, when a Tapir sees a stone, he swallows it in hopes that it may be the Magician's gift.

" 'A make-up story ?' I shouldn't be surprised, Val. That bird was equal to anything."

CHAPTER XV

THE KING OF THE APES

THE first thing Val said when he came next time was: "Who is 'the King of the Apes?'" And the Grey Man had to think for a moment before he remembered the story of the Magician's Stone.

"In the islands of Malay it would be the Orang-utan, or 'The-man-of-the-woods,'" he said, "though the great Gorilla of West Africa, which stands well over six feet when upright, is both bigger and more powerful than he. But the Chimpanzee, who is shorter and slighter, might well claim the title on account of his very human-like intelligence—he really does all but speak! These three, with the Gibbons, are what we call the 'Man-like Apes,' certain parts of their bodies being very like ours, while they show a tendency to walk upright."

"Tell us about the Orang-utan first," said Val. "I like the sound of his name."

"I don't think you'd like him if you came across him in the forests of Borneo or Sumatra, where he lives now, for he's rather alarming to look at. His arms are so long that when he stands upright he

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

can touch his ankles with the tips of his fingers, while his short thick legs are twisted so that his knees turn outwards, and when he walks he can only tread on the outer side of his foot. The skin of his face is a curious slate colour, and there are often bright yellow rings round his eyes; his shaggy coat is a brilliant red, and he has so much of it that travellers have often wondered what use he has for such long hair when the climate of his native islands is so steamingly hot.

“But Nature knows what she is about, and that shaggy coat of his not only protects his body from the torrents of rain that fall in the rainy season, but also from the poisonous mosquitoes that infest the swamps, and would doubtless feast on him if they could.

“Unlike most of the Apes and Monkeys, he is slow and cautious in his movements, testing each branch of the trees among which he moves before he trusts his weight to it, and never attempting a flying leap from one bough to another. But, though he seems to move so slowly, he gets along as quickly as a man could run on the ground below were the dense undergrowth cleared away, and he seems to be always moving about in search of food. His favourite fruit is the Durian, or Jack-fruit, though he also eats leaves and buds, and young bamboo shoots. It is very smart of him to get at the Jack-fruit, for its tough rind is covered with sharp prickles.



Ape



Orang-utans

THE KING OF THE APES

"The Man-of-the-woods sleeps in a tree that is well protected from the wind, and here he weaves himself a cosy shelter of twigs and leaves. Until close upon midday, when the sun has dried up the heavy dew, he usually dozes; then he starts off to find his breakfast, most likely accompanied by several relatives. I expect he has another doze later on, and then goes fruit-hunting again. He is very fond of his own family, and pets his young ones as Daddy does you.

"Like other Apes that resemble man, the Orang-utan is very helpless when newly born. A famous explorer had a young one brought to him in Borneo when the little thing was only some twelve inches long, and he had to feed him with rice water through a quill, since milk couldn't be had for love or money. The baby Orang-utan loved being nursed, and tugged so hard at the explorer's beard that it was very difficult to undo his fingers. If he couldn't get what he wanted that very instant, he screamed, and sometimes threw himself on the ground, for all the world like a spoilt child.

"It was lonely for him all by himself, and when he was about three weeks old a young Macaque Monkey, much more forward for his age, was brought to keep him company. The little Orang-utan was delighted with him, and romped happily all day long, until he sickened with fever and died.

"It is because they are so difficult to rear that few

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

menageries possess an Orang-utan. If captured when full grown, he seldom lives long—and capturing him is no easy matter! He will fearlessly attack men, even though they are armed with spears, and may inflict terrible injuries before he is overpowered.

“When taken young, however, he grows deeply attached to the master who is kind to him, as, indeed, every wild beast does. Queen Victoria was much interested in an Orang-utan named ‘Jenny,’ which used to live in the Zoo. Among Jenny’s many accomplishments was that of drinking her tea ‘like a lady,’ sipping it daintily from her cup as if to the manner born. She was extremely pleased when praised, and delighted in showing off her tricks to an admiring audience.

“There’s not the least doubt that the higher Apes know when they are doing wrong. If interrupted in trying to tear away the wire netting at the side of his cage, one little Orang-utan ran to his keeper, and hugged and kissed him, as if begging not to be punished; while another, when he had been particularly disobedient and felt he deserved correction, hastened to cover himself with his blanket or some straw, so that a blow from a whip might not hurt him.

“A young Gorilla is just as childlike, and shows no trace of his father’s fierceness. Some years ago one was captured in Africa and sent to Berlin as a passenger on board ship. He was not chained up

THE KING OF THE APES

during the voyage, and amused everyone by his antics. He learnt to feed himself from a plate, and to drink quite prettily from a little cup, which he put back in its proper place when he had finished with it. He loved sweet things, and in order to help himself to sugar would cunningly walk across the deck in the opposite direction from the cabin where it was kept until he thought no one was looking at him. Then he doubled round, and made his way to the cupboard, when he seized the sugar box and was off in no time. This young Gorilla was very clean, and if anything stuck to his coat which he could not brush off, he would coaxingly hold up his arms and ask for this to be done for him as plainly as if he were speaking.

“But though a little Gorilla is quite good company, a grown-up one is a terrible beast. His massive body is covered with blackish bristles, and his neck is so thick that he seems to have none. Huge tusks poke out from his heavy jaw, and his overhanging eyebrows give him a ferocious frown. He is so much feared by some African tribes that they worship him as a god, believing that a fierce and revengeful spirit dwells in his hideous form. Even in these days tales are still told of Gorillas carrying off women and children to their forest lairs, though it is very unlikely that this ever happened.

“But he’s a cruel monster, from all accounts, and kills for the sake of killing, frequently catching a bird in his hand and squeezing the life out of it, though he

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

does not want it to eat. He lives in small groups and is savage even to his own kindred; but his mates—they're much smaller than he, by the way—care tenderly for their babies. Sometimes he shrieks for hours together, apparently for no reason. Travellers who have watched from some safe shelter declare that the younger members of his family try to quiet him by bringing him palm-nuts and fruit. More often than not he rejects these offerings, and goes on yelling worse than ever. It is said to be even a more horrible sound to listen to than a Lion's roar, and every creature in the forest gets as far away from him as he can.

“But there's one thing to be said for him—he has quite strict notions of honour, and not only punishes others of his tribe who rob their neighbours, but does not steal himself. The law of the jungle is rigidly enforced in the court of the great Gorilla, and death is the punishment he decrees to rebellious subjects.

“The Chimpanzee is a great improvement on him, both in looks and disposition. The bony ridges over the eyes that make the Gorilla look so fierce are absent with him, and instead of bristles he has sleek black hair, which is sometimes tinged with brown or red, and is of finer texture. No matter how much he may romp and play, he never looks untidy or unkempt, and his hair is so smoothly and nattily parted down the middle of his head that you might fancy his mother had done it for him.



Chimpanzee

THE KING OF THE APES

"The Chimpanzee lives in Central and Western Africa. His 'hut,' which no one believed in for a long time, in spite of travellers' tales, is a canopy he weaves for himself out of twigs and greenery, above some forked branch of a tree, on which he sits with one arm wound round the trunk, very much at his ease. No fruit comes amiss to him, but he is particularly fond of a kind of wild ginger, which has red husks. These he strews around him as he feeds, and by their means he is often tracked to the depths of the jungle by natives who are on his trail.

"In the daytime he usually stays on the ground, not feeling particularly keen on climbing. He likes plenty of company, and goes about with other Chimpanzees, being much more sociable than the Gorilla. Bananas are a great weakness of his, and if he and his troop learn the whereabouts of a plantation, they will lay it waste in a single night.

"You would laugh if you saw them trying to walk upright, for they stoop much more than Gorillas do, since, as their arms are not so long, they must lean on their knuckles instead of on the palms of their open hands. But though they're grotesque enough as they scamper through the jungle, if you saw them dancing by moonlight you would fancy you had surprised a party of grim black goblins."

"Dancing?" cried Val, inclined to think that the Grey Man was telling a fairy tale.

"Yes—dancing, boy! They hold high carnival

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

when the great Gorillas are out of the way, and make such weird sounds that the forest rings! The high rolling notes they give vent to then are quite unlike their ordinary voices, and, to add to the din, they beat their clenched hands on a kind of drum—a patch of dry clay they have spread thinly when wet over some porous peat. This gives out a hollow sound when struck. How they first thought of making such a thing is always a puzzle to me. But that they do make these ‘drums’ there is no doubt now, for their finger-marks have been plainly seen on the clay. This must often be brought from a river-bank quite a long distance off.

“The intelligence of Chimpanzees is often startling, especially when they’re in their own land and have only had Nature for their teacher. When first they meet a white man they take little notice of him beyond a curious stare, but they very soon learn it means ‘danger’ when someone appears with a spear, and then they attack him savagely. An unarmed native is always safe with them. Livingstone tells how a Chimpanzee once stole up behind a native while he was hoeing the ground. The grinning creature caught hold of the man’s shoulder, shook him, and ran off, ‘giggling’! Livingstone was convinced that he meant no harm, only wishing to give the fellow a fright ‘for fun.’

“There’s a charming story about a Chimpanzee brought home by a traveller to Grenoble, in France,

THE KING OF THE APES

who became so tame that they gave him his liberty, and allowed him to roam where he would. One day, when taking a stroll by himself, he saw a child fall into a well. Most likely he felt as if it were his own young one, for without an instant's hesitation he sprang over the top, caught hold of the rope to which the bucket was fastened, and let himself down, hand over hand, till he reached the very bottom. As the drowning child rose to the surface of the water, he seized her and dragged her out, scrambling up the rope again like the clever acrobat he is, and handed her back to her mother, safe and sound. Yes, this 'really did happen,' Nancy; and the little thing certainly owed her life to that Chimpanzee.

"The Gibbons, or long-armed Apes, come from the warmer parts of South-Eastern Asia, and are very numerous in the islands of the Malay peninsula. Their bodies are exceedingly thin and slender, and they sometimes use their very long arms to help them over the ground. Often they walk as erect as we do, with their hands lightly clasped at the back of the neck; and then they look the funniest little people you can imagine.

"The Siamang is the largest of all the Gibbons. He comes from Sumatra, and is about three feet high when fully grown. Less active than most of his clan, who are as much at home upon the ground as they are in the trees, he seldom leaves the boughs except to feed. His arms span nearly twice the

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

length of his body, and with these he swings himself from branch to branch, using his feet for plucking fruit. He goes in troops, each troop having a leader whose will is law. At dawn and sunset the Siamangs assemble together and join their cries, 'to welcome the sun and the evening star'; these cries are so shrill that they're heard for miles, and wake everyone within earshot who is asleep.

"There are Agile Gibbons, White-handed Gibbons, Silvery Gibbons, and Hullocks, with many others, all of which make amiable and affectionate pets, though I must say that I prefer Milady here. Watching them in their native lands, one is amazed at the leaps they take, apparently without the slightest effort. Eighteen feet is nothing to them, and a traveller claims to have seen one jump to a branch forty feet away.

"The affection they show for friends and kindred is very marked. A mother Gibbon is a most industrious nurse, never leaving her baby for a moment, and often carrying it down to a stream in order that she may wash it carefully. A gentleman whose garden was the playground of a troop of Gibbons used to watch them for hours together, and their kindness to one another struck him very much.

"One day he saw a young one miss his aim in taking a leap, and instead of catching the branch he was trying for in his outstretched hand, he lost his balance and fell to the ground. He was

THE KING OF THE APES

up the tree again in an instant, but his wrist was broken, and his hand dangled helplessly.

"The other Gibbons flocked round at his cries, holding him in their arms, and moaning for sympathy. An old female Gibbon, supposed to be no relation, looked after him from this time, and when the owner of the garden gave her plantains, she always took the first to the little invalid, waiting on him before she ate herself. The others were very kind to him too, but he was her special charge. I don't suppose he was ever able to get about again in the branches, so most likely she nursed him until he died. After he was hurt he made his home in the eaves of a wooden house, where it was easy to watch him."

"I hadn't any idea," said Val, "that animals were so good to each other. Why, I don't think even *people* would have been kinder than that monkey!"

"Not quite so kind, perhaps, Val, for helpless folk are a bit troublesome," said the Grey Man slowly. And then he did not speak for a minute; and Nancy laid her cheek on his hand.

CHAPTER XVI

MONKEYS AND MONKEY TALES

GO on, please!" said Val, as the Grey Man stirred. He was wondering just then if Billy could be coaxed to live on friendly terms with a Gibbon, for he thought he would very much like to have one if only his mother would say "Yes."

"Well, now we come to the Monkeys and Baboons, of which there are so many different kinds that it would take me months to tell you about them.

"The Langurs of India are interesting creatures, so we'll begin with these. Unlike most of the Old-World Monkeys, they have no cheek pouches in which to cram their food, to be devoured at leisure. But they get on very well without them, since, instead of nuts, which take time to crack, they feed chiefly on leaves and young shoots.

"The Langurs are remarkable for their very long tails, and the stiff dark bristles which stick straight out from their bushy eyebrows. A sailor, imprisoned in Ceylon, sent home an account of them some two hundred and thirty years ago, and described them as looking like 'little old men,' with funny dark faces

MONKEYS AND MONKEY TALES

and bushy white beards that actually ran from ear to ear. The long-limbed Langur called the Hanuman is the 'sacred' monkey of the East; and since for centuries past the Hindus have allowed him to do just whatever he likes, whether this is to plunder their grain shops or to tear down their vines, even in his wild state he is almost fearless.

"His deadly enemy is the Tiger, and his guttural cry of warning—very different from the joyous 'whoop' he gives as he bounds from tree to tree—often tells the hunters where the beast they are tracking lies crouched in the undergrowth. They say that sometimes the Hanuman actually points to the Tiger's hiding-place, as anxious as they that he should be killed.

"There are White and Negro and Purple-faced Langurs, amongst a great many others. Then there are Snub-nosed Monkeys whose warm winter coats are tufted with golden hair: they live in the Highlands of North-Western China; and a monkey in Borneo with such an enormous nose that it droops down and hides the greater part of his mouth! Many other Monkeys quite as strange live in different parts of the Old World, but I don't think any of them could look more queer than one of the Guerezas of Africa, who carries a flowing mantle of long white hair on the end of his slender tail. The King Monkey of Sierra Leone, with a dazzling snowy mane on his throat and chest—a contrast to his glossy black coat—is a handsome fellow. Of the Guenons, also

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

found in Africa, you'd like the beautiful little Mona Monkey best. The Mangabeys, or White-eyelid Monkeys, of West Africa are very quaint, and so are the Macaques. I've seen a good deal of these, so I can tell you more about them.

"Anything but lovely is the Pig-tailed Macaque, who is trained by the natives of Sumatra to mount cocoanut trees and throw down the ripe fruit when they give the word. They say he's remarkably good at the job, and always chooses the soundest fruit. The last Macaque of this kind I saw was in some gardens at Amsterdam. He was the most unsociable Monkey I ever met, and would have nothing to say to me ; but some young ones next door were jolly little creatures, romping together like children.

"Macaques in a wild state are almost entirely confined to Asia, where they live in large or small troops, according to the district they inhabit, each troop being under the command of a leader. The babies are carried everywhere by their mothers, who make funny little noises to soothe them in much the same way that your mother sang lullabies to you when you wouldn't go to sleep.

"The Bengal Macaque, also called the Rhesus Monkey, is found all over Northern India. His manners and customs are like those of the Pig-tailed Macaque in most things, though I should certainly count him as more amiable. He and his friends have a mountain all to themselves in the heights above



Monkeys

MONKEYS AND MONKEY TALES

Simla, called Jako Hill, and a fakir—a wandering ‘holy man’—lives in their midst, and feeds them regularly. Whenever he calls, they all flock round him, and take their food quietly from his hand.

“At the time of the Indian Mutiny an Englishman came across a party of Rhesus Monkeys crossing the rocks. There were several mothers among them, with babies on their shoulders, and he thought he would run these down and carry off two or three of the young ones. On seeing what he was after, the old males of the troop stopped their headlong flight and turned to charge him. They were so much in earnest that he had, much to his surprise, to defend himself with his pistol.”

“I hope he didn’t get any of those babies!” cried Val, his eyes very bright. The Grey Man did not seem to hear, which was a way he had when he didn’t want to answer; and Nancy thought she could guess why he began to talk of something else.

“The Bonnet Macaque is a great favourite in South India,” he said. “He gets his name from the way in which his hair grows; and when he’s dressed up by a native conjurer, and taken round to dance at festivals, he seems to enjoy the fun as much as anyone. Then there’s the Crab-eating Macaque, called by the Malays the *Kra*, from his peculiar cry. It is strange to think that he should have taken to the water for his living, and learnt to prefer shell-fish to any other diet.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

“Very likely a Macaque was the heroine of a story I once heard about a Monkey from Ceylon. She belonged to a tea planter, who gave her the run of his bungalow, and she was very tame. For some time she lived with him quite happily, keeping him company when he smoked or read, and quite content if he petted her now and then. But one day at the end of the rainy season, when flowers and grass were springing up everywhere, she heard her kinsfolk calling her.

“After that, though she loved her master as much as ever, she could not stay. One night she was off and away to the woods, where the wind sang songs in the leafy trees, and the boughs seemed made for her to swing on.

“The tea planter thought she had gone for ever, and soon forgot her. But the Monkey didn’t forget him, and many months later she came back at dusk, with a fluffy baby in her arms!

“The planter was delighted with the little one, but he thought that ‘one Monkey was quite enough’; and as soon as her baby could feed itself, he was heartless enough to give his old friend to the quartermaster of a ship. Her new master did all he could to reconcile her to her lot on board ship, but, as if she knew how badly she had been treated, and didn’t mean to trust a man again, she refused to look at him, and turned her back when anyone approached her. She would not eat, or stir from her

MONKEYS AND MONKEY TALES

corner, and it was clear to everyone that she would pine away. But at last, to the great relief of the quartermaster, who particularly wanted her for his little girl, she took a great fancy to the ship's cat, and the two became inseparable. Then the poor little Monkey, having found something to love and trust, regained her health and spirits, and reached England alive after all. I hope she was happy in her new home, and that the kind old cat went with her.

"Another Monkey who was sent for a sea voyage took a violent fancy to a fat little baby, which the baby's mother didn't quite like! She never quite knew what the Monkey might do with it, you see, so she was very careful not to leave it alone. One day, however, when it was asleep on a couch in the saloon, she went on deck for a moment to speak to the captain.

"'Here's my chance!' thought the Monkey gleefully, as he watched her out of the corner of his eye. No one else was about, so he stole down below, and quickly picked up the baby. He held it so gently that I don't think it cried, not even when he climbed the rigging! Its mother was horrified when she looked up and saw the two of them at the very top of the mast; but no coaxing would tempt that Monkey down, and they dare not threaten him lest he should get angry and throw the baby away. At last, in despair, the Captain

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

ordered the sailors below, and he and the baby's mother, who was nearly out of her senses with fear, hid behind a box.

"The baby was rather heavy, and when the Monkey saw that the coast was clear, he thought he might just as well come down and play with it in comfort. The baby's mother held her breath, not daring to stir, and the Captain made ready to seize it the moment the two reached the deck. But the Monkey was too quick for him, and slipping nimbly down the ladder, took the baby back to the couch where he found it!"

"I do like those kind of stories!" cried Nancy.

"Then here is another which was told to me as quite a true one. A man brought a big Monkey home with him from Africa. This Monkey—I don't know his name, but we'll call him Jacko—immediately adopted his master's little girl of two, and was her most devoted guardian. One day a fire broke out in the house. The little girl's mother must have been away, for in the confusion the child was forgotten, and left upstairs in the top nursery, where she had probably been asleep. When they discovered that she was missing, the staircase was already in flames, and the longest ladder the firemen had brought wasn't long enough to reach the window. Her father was frantic, and no one could think what to do next.

"But Jacko hadn't forgotten the baby, even if

MONKEYS AND MONKEY TALES

everyone else had ; and just at this moment a hairy hand and arm were seen pushing up the nursery window. Then Jacko climbed gingerly out on to the sill, holding the little thing clasped tightly against his breast, and in the way that only Monkeys can, he let himself down, clinging first to a ledge and then to some projecting corner, until at last they were on the ground. Not a hair of the baby's head was hurt—wasn't he a splendid friend ?”

Nancy drew a deep breath, and hugged Billy tight. “I *should* like a Monkey!” she cried. Billy growled. Perhaps he had had a bad dream, or Milady, who shared Nancy's lap with him, may have just tweaked one of his knowing ears ; for he sat up suddenly, bolt upright, and gazed at his mistress with deep reproach in his beautiful liquid brown eyes.

“You would find a Monkey an awkward pet in town,” the Grey Man told her, giving Billy a reassuring pat. “Monkeys, you know, are the most mischievous creatures going, and I daresay that same Jacko got into heaps of scrapes.

“Not so long ago I heard of a little chap in Burma who played such tricks with his master's belongings that it was decided to chain him up. Accordingly, he was fastened to the leg of a heavy table—an indignity which made him extremely angry. He chattered and jabbered and scolded for some time, but as no one took any notice of him, he gave it up, and sat all that day in a grieved silence.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

“Early one morning he managed to break loose, and, running quietly round the verandah, made his way into his master’s office. He piled all the papers he could find into a heap—most likely with the idea of destroying them!—when he caught sight of a large bottle of black ink, and hastened to give himself a shower-bath with it. He did the same with a bottle of red ink, and was gaily smothering himself with gum when his master came in and surprised him.

“More mischievous still was a clever little Monkey from India who lived in an English family, and was a favourite with everyone except the cook. His great delight was to sit on the top of the nursery wardrobe and watch the nurse dress the baby. Very soon she was rewarded for her kindness, for she found him as good as a little maid. He learnt to know exactly what she wanted as the dressing went on, and would gravely climb down and hand it to her before she had time to look round for it. There was nothing that he liked better than to rock the baby’s cradle, and often when it woke and cried he was there when Nurse came, trying to hush it off to sleep.

“But the fonder other people became of him, the more it aggravated Cook, who took a malicious pleasure in giving him his food too hot. One evening the little fellow burnt his mouth with some bread and milk rather badly, and he saw the Cook laughing at him. He made no sign then, but when, next day, she hung out a line of snow-white linen to dry, he slipped into

MONKEYS AND MONKEY TALES

the garden and dragged it down, so that it was all soiled.

“To punish him, she put pepper in his food, and he went away in such dejection that she thought he was afraid, and would not dare to play tricks on her again.

“That same afternoon she tried on a grand new hat before the looking-glass, turning her head this way and that, and appearing most pleased with herself. When she went to her hat-box the following Sunday she found it empty—the hat had gone! Of course she blamed ‘that horrid monkey,’ but she couldn’t prove that he had touched it, or even knew where it had been kept. She hunted for it all over the house, but not a sign of it could she see, and at last she gave up the search.

“A little while afterward she was cleaning a grate, and could not get her brush up the chimney. So she put up her hand—and down came her new hat, all black and begrimed with soot! You may be sure her fellow-servants told her that she had only got what she deserved, and I expect that in future she left Mr Monkey alone!”

CHAPTER XVII

MORE MONKEYS: BABOONS AND LEMURS

VAL and I saw a dear little Monkey once," said Nancy dreamily. "He was with an organ man, who called him 'my beauty,' and kissed his hand. His face was white, and so was his forehead, and the bit of his chest I could see; but his tail was a bright red brown. He wore a flannel coat and a wee red cap, but he shivered ever so."

"Poor little beggar," said the Grey Man. "He was very likely a Sapajou—a docile and very bright little Monkey belonging to America. The Sapajou stands our climate fairly well, but the cold and damp must be a great trial to him. And think how lonely he must feel with none of his friends around! If his master is very kind, I don't suppose he minds so much, for he's an extremely affectionate and grateful little beast."

"It was one of the small American Monkeys who went to the rescue of his keeper, who, in bending low to clean out his cage, was attacked and thrown down by the savage Baboon that shared it with him. The little Monkey was terribly afraid of this big Baboon,



Baboon

MORE MONKEYS

and never went within his reach if he could help it; but when he saw his keeper being hurt, he forgot his fears and flew at his enemy, beating him off with his little weak hands, and shrieking with all his might. His shrill cries soon brought help and the keeper's life was saved.

"All kinds of stories are told of Sapajous—how dearly they love, how readily they learn, and how long and how well they remember. A lady once saw one belonging to an organ-grinder, as you and Val did, and, filled with pity for the trembling little thing, bought him and took him home. Some months later, when he had become used to his new surroundings, and had grown sleek and fat, she gave a concert in her house for the sake of the sick and poor. The little Monkey, now one of the family, and free to run where he would, listened quietly until the singing had ended, when he picked up a hat belonging to someone in the audience, and gravely carried it round. He hadn't forgotten what used to be his duty, and thought it was time to bestir himself! And the poor folk for whom that concert was given had many extra comforts, thanks to him.

"Besides the Sapajous, of which there are several different kinds, any number of Monkeys are found in America. None of them have cheek pouches, and their tails—poor Milady! don't tease her, Val!—are usually long, and what we call 'prehensile.' This means, you know, that their owners can curl the tips

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

of them round anything they wish, which is most convenient when they want to swing head downward from a bough.

"Howlers and Spider Monkeys are both well known in South America. The Howlers get their name from the extraordinary noise they make at dawn, as if they were saluting the rising sun. To give this strange cry, they whistle through a hollow shell of bone which is joined on to the upper part of the windpipe. One Howler, the Indians say, always takes the lead in these weird strains, and his voice can be heard above all the rest, till another, in turn, leads the chorus."

"And what are Spider Monkeys like?" It was Nancy who thought of asking this, for though spiders always made her shudder, she couldn't help thinking about them.

"They are very slender, and that is how they get their name. And no Spider Monkey has a thumb! It wouldn't be much good to him if he had, for he mostly uses his hands as hooks to hold on to the boughs by. Unlike the Howler, he has quite a good temper, and is often tamed for a pet.

"The best-known Spider Monkey is the Red-faced one, found in Brazil and Guiana, where he goes about in small parties. He is much less lively than the Sapajou, but the natives are quite fond of him. Sometimes, it's said, their wives nurse him as they do their own babies, and he is really

MORE MONKEYS

like a child to them, seeming to understand every word they say. But I'm sorry to tell you that, in spite of their fondness for him he's often eaten, the people thinking his flesh 'very good.'

"The Sapajou, no doubt, is eaten too, and the natives have a most ingenious way of catching him. First they scoop out the pulp of a fine pumpkin through two holes that are only just big enough for a Monkey to get his hands in; then they carefully fill the hollow fruit with rice, and smear sugar around both holes. The pumpkin is then left under a tree, and presently a chattering Monkey spies it. A minute later, and he has leapt to the ground, intent upon finding out all about it.

"'What a feast I'll have!' he says to himself, as he sticks his little hands through the holes and greedily licks up the sugar. Looking slyly round to see that no one's near, he grabs as much rice as he can hold, and tries to withdraw his hands. Of course he can't, and the curious thing is, that with all his sharpness he has not the wit to unclench his hands and let the rice go.

"And now a grinning native appears, and since no Sapajou can run with a pumpkin hanging from him, a sack is soon popped over his head, and his freedom is lost for ever.

"The Baboons, or Dog-faced Monkeys, are for the most part extremely unattractive. They belong entirely to the Old World, and are very common in

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

West Africa. When on the ground—and they do very little climbing—they walk on all fours, their big heads and clumsy bodies making an upright position almost impossible for them. When chased they can run as quickly as a Horse can gallop, and it is very difficult to catch them when they have been making a midnight raid on a grain field. Members of the troop are posted as sentinels at different points of vantage, and at the first alarm the Baboons scatter. If attacked at close quarters they sit up on their hind legs to defend themselves; and a bite from a Baboon is a very serious matter.

“The favourite haunt of many of them is a rocky hill, for this affords them convenient cover. Living almost entirely on the ground, they are more liable than other Monkeys to be preyed upon by wild beasts, and this is why they go in such numbers, knowing that union is strength. I have heard of a marauding Leopard being attacked and killed by a party of male Baboons, and when we remember what formidable tusks these have, this isn't at all surprising.

“A traveller in the Sudan during the hot season sent home a most amusing story of the troops of Baboons he met coming down to the rivers for water. The great males, he said, marched grandly on in front, meekly followed by their smaller mates with their babies upon their backs, and all the rest of the troop. If a young Baboon with specially sharp eyes discovered a bush of sweet red berries, he

MORE MONKEYS

stepped aside for a private feast, but was very quickly found out. His companions then rushed helter-skelter to claim their share in the good things that were going, and squabbled and fought till an old male came back to cuff and bite them into order, and then eat the berries himself!

“Another famous explorer who wrote a book about his travels tells how carefully Baboons make sure before drinking at a stream that their dreaded foe the Crocodile is nowhere near; and from all this traveller saw of them he believes that Baboons have a language of their own.

“Besides small fruits of all kinds, and shoots and buds, many of the Baboon tribe eat birds' eggs, and lizards, insects, and ants. Indeed, there are few things they don't eat if they can get them, nothing coming much amiss. The Mantled Baboon, however, who is now found only in Arabia, Abyssinia, and the Sudan, feeds chiefly on vegetable food.

“This strange-looking creature was well known in Egypt long ago, being worshipped by the ancient Egyptians, who sculptured him on many of their monuments. He is about the size of a large dog, with a tuft of hair on the tip of his long tail. His coat, with its mantle of shaggy hair which covers his shoulders, is a dull slate grey; his face and ears are flesh-colour, but his hands are black. The Gelada Baboon has a mane too, and is considered to be very like a big black French Poodle. You'd

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

find Chacma, Yellow, Anubis, and Guinea Baboons all interesting if we had time to talk about them.

“The Mandrill and the Drill, first cousins, are the most curious Baboons of all however. Both come from West Africa, and have only stumps for tails, but the Mandrill, if possible, is the more hideous. He’s very big and powerfully built, and the natives live in terror of him, though it is impossible to say how far the tales they tell are true. If you want to know what he is like, you must picture the most ferocious Baboon you can, with an enormous head and huge sausage-shaped ribbed swellings on either side of his muzzle. The Drill has these too, but while his are black, those of the full-grown male Mandrill are brilliant blue and purple, with a flaming red line in the middle. This colour is repeated on the tip of his nose, and on parts of him at the back. His pointed beard is bright orange yellow, while his coat is dark olive, with white underneath. His hair stands up on the top of his head in a high peaked crest, and his large naked ears are bluish black.

“But it is really his expression that makes him so horrible—he looked to me more like a jealous and savage goblin of the under-world than any living thing. Most old male Baboons are fierce and sullen, but none of them have such a scowl as his.”

“I s’pose nobody ever makes pets of Baboons,” said Val. “*I* shouldn’t want to, anyhow.”

MORE MONKEYS

“You might, if you caught one young enough, for some captured early have been very tame, and have, even when fully grown, remained gentle and amiable. That explorer who said he was sure that Baboons have some direct means of speaking to one another kept one himself. The Baboon loved him dearly, and when he returned from a journey would sight him a very long distance off, and go nearly wild with joy.

“This creature, like all his near and distant relations, forms strong attachments to his master, but is usually ready to take offence, and turns sulky on small provocation. One of the most pathetic stories I know is told of a Baboon that lived long ago in the Zoological Gardens of Dublin, and was devoted to the Superintendent, who always paid him a special visit when he came to the Monkey House. One day, going round with a visitor, he forgot to take any notice of the Baboon, and when next he came the creature would have nothing to say to him. Months went by, and though the poor thing grew very ill, he still refused to recognize the friend he thought had slighted him. But the day before he died he crawled to the side of the cage, and feebly held out his paw through the bars to the Superintendent in token of his forgiveness.

“Baboons are strongly attached to each other, as well as to us, though they quarrel fiercely. There’s a quite true story of an army of Arabian Baboons that went to the rescue of some comrades who had been captured by hunters, whose arms availed them nothing

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

against the almost incredible number of the enemy. In spite of the firing, the powerful animals rushed at the cage in which their friends were imprisoned, and succeeded in tearing it to pieces! And whenever Baboons are caught and carried away, it is said that those which have escaped the hunters come back to surround the prisoner's hut, seeming to urge them in some strange speech to break down the walls and get free."

"They're not nearly so bad as they look!" said Nancy thoughtfully.

Val nodded. "All the same," he said, "I don't think I want to know them."

"There are some pretty little creatures called Lemurs from which all the Monkeys are said to have sprung," said the Grey Man presently. "True Lemurs are only found in Madagascar, and even there travelers seldom see them, since most don't come out until night. They move so softly and silently through the boughs of the forest trees that the natives say they are 'ghosts' or 'spirits,' and are afraid to molest them.

"Their quaint little fox-like faces are quite different from those of Monkeys, their supposed descendants, and when they have tails these are not 'prehensile,' so they cannot use them for holding on to a bough. As if to make up for this, however, on the second toe of each foot they have a very sharp claw, which they find very handy in seeking their food. They eat leaves and fruit, small snakes, and birds' eggs and



Ring-tailed Lemurs

MORE MONKEYS

birds, besides insects of all kinds, and unless they are thirsty and want to drink, they very seldom trust themselves on the ground. Like their cousins, the Lorises, which are found in South-western Asia, and other Lemur-like animals, they have very large and brilliant eyes, so formed as to take advantage of the smallest glimmer of moonlight or starlight that may pierce the thick clusters of leaves on the boughs. All Lemurs are peculiarly agile, but the Flying Lemur can leap from a tree some two hundred feet high to the ground by means of a membrane attached to his limbs, which acts as a kind of sail or parachute.

“The Ring-tailed Lemur is one of the best known of all his tribe, for though he sleeps through the hottest part of the day, he wanders about in search of food in the early mornings and evenings, generally in company with several companions. He would look rather like a small grey Fox except for that bushy tail of his, which is beautifully marked with black and white rings. Many of his relations scarcely utter a sound, but he is a noisy little chap, and his cries are peculiarly piercing. He’s one of the few Lemurs which do not live in trees, and the rocks are his favourite haunt. It is wonderful how well his leathery palms can grasp wet and slippery surfaces—even a native cannot follow him without slipping.

“The prettiest Lemur of all, perhaps, is the Dwarf Mouse Lemur, also only found in Madagascar, and often but the size of a big Mouse. He has very

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

large eyes and rather large ears, and a very long tail. Through the hottest part of the season he sleeps in the cosy little nest he has made for himself of twigs and moss, neatly woven together. His tail is extremely fat when the time comes for him to curl up and go to sleep, but when the rains come and he awakes it seems to have withered away to nothing. He has been living on his fat, you see, just as Bears live on theirs when they sleep through the winter.

“A little girl in Natal I used to know—she would be quite a big girl by this time!—had a pretty little brown Lemur for a playfellow. He was very timid when he first came to her, but he soon grew used to his new home, and began to assert himself. Most of the day he spent in a tree in her garden, very likely dozing, since he wasn't accustomed to be up and about in the daytime; but directly her bedtime came, and she wanted to settle him for the night, she had only to clap her hands and call ‘Peter!’ when down he came. When the weather was very cold she gave him a hot-water bottle, which he hugged quite close, with great approval. He was particularly fond of jam, she told me, and if he were given a sandwich of this would open it and lick off the jam, throwing away the bread.”

“Billy doesn't like bread, either,” said Val. “I think goloshes are his favourite food.”

And Billy hung his head with shame as the Grey Man heard what he had done that day.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TALLEST ANIMAL IN THE WORLD

THERE'S one partikler animal I've always wanted to know about," Val told the Grey Man next time they met. "His name's the Giraffe, and he's so big and funny! I've seen pictures of him at school."

"He's the tallest animal in the world," the Grey Man said, "and it would take three tall men, standing one on the top of the other's head, to reach as high as he does! I expect you noticed how long his neck is, and it's this, with the length of two bones in his legs, that gives him his great height.

"Funny as he may look in a picture, he would seem just right if you saw him on the plains of Africa, browsing on the high boughs of the acacia tree, which are what he likes best to eat. Once upon a time, men think, the Giraffe may have eaten grass or low shrubs, just as many of the deer do now. But presently—perhaps there were so many creatures feeding on the ground that he could not get as much as he wanted—he thought he would try green leaves instead, and stretched himself up to reach them. They tasted good—quite as good

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

as grass ; so he changed his habits, and fed off the boughs, stripping the leaves from these with his long tongue. He can make it so slender, naturalists say, that it would actually fit into the barrel of a door-key, and it is really amazing to see how far he can thrust it out of his mouth.

“Well, many hundreds of years went by, and from so much reaching—so wise folk think!—his neck grew longer and longer, until at last he became the great Giraffe. Those Giraffes which had the longest necks, you see, would be able to get more food, so they would have more chance of living than those that were only half fed. The necks of their little ones would most likely be long too, and those of *their* young ones longer still, till presently the Giraffe could reach just as high as ever he wanted.

“The trees that he feeds upon from choice have all very thorny leaves, but Nature has so protected him that these don't hurt him at all. His large slit nostrils are provided with a muscle which closes them tightly down not only when there is a sand-storm on the plains, but if a thorn tries to poke itself into his tender nose ; and his long and flexible upper lip, which is as sensitive as the tip of an Elephant's trunk, and almost as useful, has such tough outer skin that nothing can pierce it. So he would feed in peace if he had not to be always on the look-out for Lions, which consider him as great a dainty as he considers acacia leaves.”

THE TALLEST ANIMAL

"And he's so 'mensely big that he can't hide!" said Nancy sadly. She too had seen a picture of the Giraffe, and his gentle expression had won her heart.

"You needn't be sorry for him on that account, little woman," said the Grey Man, bending forward to lift her still farther into the nest of cushions she shared with Billy and Milady. "As a matter of fact, that curiously marked skin of his blends as perfectly with his surroundings as the Lion's tawny skin blends with the desert sands. It is very difficult to see a Giraffe even when quite a short distance away, and his eyes are set so prominently in his head, and at such an angle, that he can see all round the horizon. So he is not so often taken unawares as you might think; and besides, he kicks out so fiercely with his hind legs that, unless his enemy is actually on his back before he knows it, with cruel claws buried deep in his tender flesh, the Lion may possibly be driven off. It is in this way that a mother Giraffe defends her baby, which can trot by her side when it is three days old.

"Giraffes are very timid creatures, and at the slightest sound they gallop off, curling their tails like corkscrews over their backs, and straddling out their awkward-looking hind legs in such a queer way that you would think they couldn't get on at all. But only a fleet horse can run one down, and a Giraffe's feet are so well fitted for climbing that once on the rocky

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

heights he may escape. Ravines are nothing to him—he can jump them easily. So you see the natives who hunt him for his flesh have their work cut out to catch him. Sometimes they trap him by means of pitfalls, for his hide is of value to them, as well as his flesh.

“One of the funniest things about a Giraffe is the way in which he straddles out his legs if he wants to pick up a leaf from the ground or to drink from a stream or river. In some parts of Africa no water can be had for quite six months in the year, and all this time the Giraffe gets on quite happily without it. When the rivers are full, however, he drinks long and deeply, and to reach the water with his lips he has to take the most comical attitude, in spite of his long neck. Give me that pencil, Val, and a sheet of paper. See! His legs are jerked out sideways like this—yes, so; as straight and as stiff as the legs of an easel! Sometimes he wades into the centre of the stream, and then, of course, he can manage comfortably, since he hasn't far to stoop. It is when he comes to drink from the banks that a beast of prey finds his chance to surprise him, lying in wait behind a bush close by, and leaping on to his back as he bends to the water. The poor Giraffe knows his doom is sealed, and gallops off, to run till he drops—exhausted by pain and loss of blood, for the Lion's cruel claws tear him fearfully.

“He usually roams in a small herd, which is led by



Giraffe

THE TALLEST ANIMAL

its chief, an old male, who may stand twenty feet high. This chief is sometimes challenged at the pairing season by a younger male who is very bold, and wants to take his place. You would not recognize in the fierce combatants the gentle creatures of other times, for they seem to be possessed. It used to be said that Giraffes had no voice, but now we know that when these duels take place the angry animals bellow with rage as they aim their kicks at each other.

“Except on such occasions, a full-grown Giraffe is rarely known to utter a sound, though a young fawn bleats like a little lamb, and sometimes cries like a calf. We have a great deal yet to find out about this animal, for it is only by studying him in the wilds that we can hope to understand him, even in the very least.”

“What colour is he?” Val inquired. He had more respect for the Giraffe now that he knew he could fight.

“That depends on which kind of Giraffe you mean. In South Africa the males are generally a tawny buff spotted with white right down to their hoofs, while those found near Kilimanjaro (the highest known mountain in Africa) are marked with dark blotches on a pale ground. There is one male Giraffe whose markings are almost black; he’s found in the neighbourhood of Mount Elgon, and besides the two horns common to all his kinsfolk, he has an

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

extra pair at the back of his head. The Nubian Giraffe has a third horn, and is very handsomely marked. In all young Giraffes the horns are quite separate from the bones of their head, though they become fixed later on, and are covered with skin, not unlike the growing antlers of a deer.

“Fossils of these animals have been dug up in different parts of the world, such as Persia, Greece, China, and at the foot of the Himalaya Mountains, though now Giraffes are only found in Africa. For a long time it was thought that there were no other animals living that were in the least like them, but at the beginning of this century a great discovery was made.

“Travellers in the heart of Africa had often heard the natives talking among themselves of a mysterious creature called the Okapi, which always hid in the jungle depths. At first it was thought they had just imagined it out of the stump of some lightning-blasted tree, or a few black shadows on a moonlight night. But the blacks were most positive when questioned, and assured the unbelieving white men that Okapis were quite well known to certain of the tribes, who both hunted and trapped them.

“These reports presently came to England, and while many people made fun of ‘the new beast,’ Sir Harry Johnston, who had read in a Dutch book when he was quite a boy about a strange animal, the size of a mule or donkey, well known to savage tribes, set

THE TALLEST ANIMAL

out to find the Okapi if he were anywhere to be found. He made searching inquiries of some Congo pygmies who had been captured in their native wilds and carried off by a showman. These queer little men were put under his charge when released by the Belgian authorities, and so that they might not be made prisoners by some stronger tribe on their homeward journey, they stayed with him till he was free to take them back to the Congo himself.

"The pygmies told him that they often caught the Okapi in pits, and from all he heard of him Sir Harry thought that he must be a new kind of horse—perhaps a survivor of the three-toed horses that had galloped once upon a time in troops over the desert plains. So he set out to hunt him in the depths of the jungle, where he heard he hid.

"Presently his native guide showed him cloven hoof-marks in a little valley, crying, with great excitement, 'Okapi! Okapi!'

"Sir Harry laughed. 'Nonsense!' he cried. 'Those are the footprints of an Eland or Bongo—I can find such beasts as that any day!' And instead of listening to the guide, who was extremely eager that he should follow the tracks, he left them behind to go another way.

"Some three days later he had to halt, because his followers were ill with fever. In the village where they camped the natives were wearing curious pieces of hide—'brownish black, orange, and creamy

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

white.' Sir Harry thought that these must belong to some unknown Zebra, but their wearers told him they came from the Okapi, and that it was really this creature's tracks that he had seen. Later on an Okapi skin and two Okapi skulls were sent to him, and he guessed then that this mysterious animal was a very near relation of the Giraffes. The Okapi is not so tall, of course, and does not hold his long neck so upright when feeding; but he certainly belongs to the same family, and is thought to be descended from a very ancient Giraffe indeed.

"'Has a white man ever seen him?' Not alive, so far as I know, for the Okapi is one of the shyest beasts there is, and lives in the densest and darkest parts of the Congo jungle. But a little pygmy hunter showed a dead one that he had slain with a spear to an English soldier, who had spent nine months in seeking an Okapi without success."

"I shall hunt him when I grow up!" said Val. "But I shan't shoot him. I shall lasso him with a rope, and bring him home for everyone to see."

"I'm sure he'd rather stay in the forest," protested Nancy. But Val had made up his mind.

CHAPTER XIX

CAMELS AND LLAMAS

IF you're going to explore Africa," said the Grey Man briskly, smiling back at Nancy, "I had better tell you about the Camel, for you could not cross the deserts without his help. He's most certainly one of the 'best' animals, since, but for him, and his marvellous powers of endurance, great tracts of land would be quite shut off from the rest of the world. Only the Camel can make his way over the oceans of sand that roll between them, bearing his master on his back, besides loads of provisions and merchandise. Much of the trade in Eastern lands is carried on by means of the Camel, even to the present day.

"No other animal could take his place, for it seems as if Nature had fitted him alone to act as the Ship of the Desert. His very keen eyes are shielded from the sun's pitiless glare by thickly fringed lids and beetling brows, while, like the Giraffe, he has nostrils which he can close at will when the sand whirls round him in a storm. While the hoofs of a Horse would sink deeper and deeper in the desert paths, the big soft pads under the

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

Camel's feet spread out and give him a firm grip, so that he walks quite easily.

“And more than this: that ungainly hump of his, which should, when he is in first-rate form, rise up in the shape of a pyramid, is a store of nourishment on which he can draw when needful, just as the Bear draws on the layers of fat underneath his skin during his winter sleep. When the prickly plants of the desert have withered up, and his master cannot give him even a single date, the Camel's strength will not fail him until his hump is gone; and if his master is a wise man he will make sure before he starts that this is in good condition.

“The Ship of the Desert carries water with him too—water for others in the bulging skin bottles which are part of his heavy load, and water for himself in a wonderful reservoir of honeycombed cells inside his stomach! On the eve of his journey he takes a long drink, and the farther these cells in his stomach stretch, the more liquid he can hold. Sometimes he puts away quite six quarts, and then he can go a good many days without drinking again. Directly each cell is full, the mouth of it contracts, so shutting the water in until he needs it. I can't tell you how he makes it flow out again when he's thirsty, but I expect it is by some quite simple arrangement which he does not have to think about at all.

“It is well for the Camel that he is so provided

CAMELS AND LLAMAS

for, since the springs in the desert often dry up and the deeply sunk wells are empty. He is always the first to give notice when the caravan is approaching an oasis, a beautiful little green Paradise which breaks the long glitter of sand—it is thought in the track of some underground spring. With his curious head held high in the air, he sniffs the oasis a long way off, and, increasing his laggard pace to a gallop, hastens on to its welcome shade. There are date trees there, and juicy pomegranates, with trickling streams of sweet, cool water. And men and beasts rest and grow strong again, to finish their journey in peace and safety.

“Have you ever heard of the ‘mirage,’ Nancy? It is usually a picture of waving trees and shining pools seen low in the sky on the far horizon. Travellers almost dying with thirst see such a picture in the distance, and fancy that just a few miles ahead they will reach the longed-for haven. But as they go on the vision fades; there is only the cloudless blue, and the glittering, burning sand!”

“And were the lovely trees and pools just in their ‘magnations?” asked Nancy sorrowfully.

“I used to be told so when I was a boy,” the Grey Man answered, “and it wasn’t until I had seen a mirage myself that I learnt why these pictures appear. There *are* waving trees and shining pools somewhere, but very much farther on—below the

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

horizon and out of the traveller's sight. The mirage is the reflection of them on a layer of air which is different in temperature from the air around it, and in some wonderful way acts as a magic mirror. If we could fix a giant looking-glass at a certain angle in the sky, we should see things below the horizon reflected in this as well."

"What would happen to a Camel if he couldn't get anything to drink, and those cells in his stomach were empty?" Val demanded, too much interested in the desert to think of tea, though Milady was already listening for the tinkle of cups and saucers.

"He would die of thirst," said the Grey Man sadly; "that is, if the Vultures did not tear him to pieces first. Once a Camel is exhausted, he sinks to the ground, and after that he has little chance. Those Vultures, which hover so high in the air that they are invisible to mortal eye, except at times as the tiniest of black specks, see his plight at once, and swoop swiftly down. And very soon only his bones are left to whiten in the sunshine."

"I don't much think," said Val, rather thoughtfully, "that I shall bother about crossing deserts. They must be very dreary places. I'd rather keep to the jungle. There's always plenty of water there, and I shouldn't mind living on nuts."

"Deserts are grand enough in their own way, Val, as you would find. I don't remember ever having seen the sky so marvellously clear and blue as it seemed

CAMELS AND LLAMAS

when I saw it from the border of the Sahara. The sun shone down on the drifting sand till it looked like gleaming heaps of gold. It was amazing to think that the wind had brought it there, grain by grain, very likely from shores that were thousands of miles away. Some deserts, as perhaps you know, are said to be the dried-up beds of vast seas and lakes, and the fossilized bones of all sorts of strange creatures have been dug up from deep down below.

“It is thought that a very long time ago part of Central Asia, now entirely covered with sand, was a stretch of fertile and beautiful country, on which villages and even towns were built. But one day, most likely, a terrific sandstorm arose, burying the tallest and most splendid temples, and blotting out all signs of human life. The only creatures who lived through it are supposed to have been the Camels, which sand could neither choke nor blind, so well has Nature protected them. Those that roam in desert regions at the present day are very likely the descendants of such survivors. I know of no other wild Camels.

“Tame Camels are found both in Africa and Asia, and so far back as we can trace the story of man, Eastern tribes seem to have counted their wealth by the size of their herds of these animals.

“Even when there are no deserts to be crossed the Camel is an extremely valuable animal. Camel’s

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

milk is both rich and nourishing; his flesh is very sustaining food, and ropes and cloth are woven from his hair. In North-western India the natives drive Camels in thousands from place to place, the babies being slung in nets against their mother's side if too young to travel long distances on their own account. They are singularly helpless little creatures, and when born in captivity have to be taken the greatest care of for the first few days. Not until they are three years old are they able to be ridden; at five years of age they are fully grown, and sometimes live to be five-and-twenty.

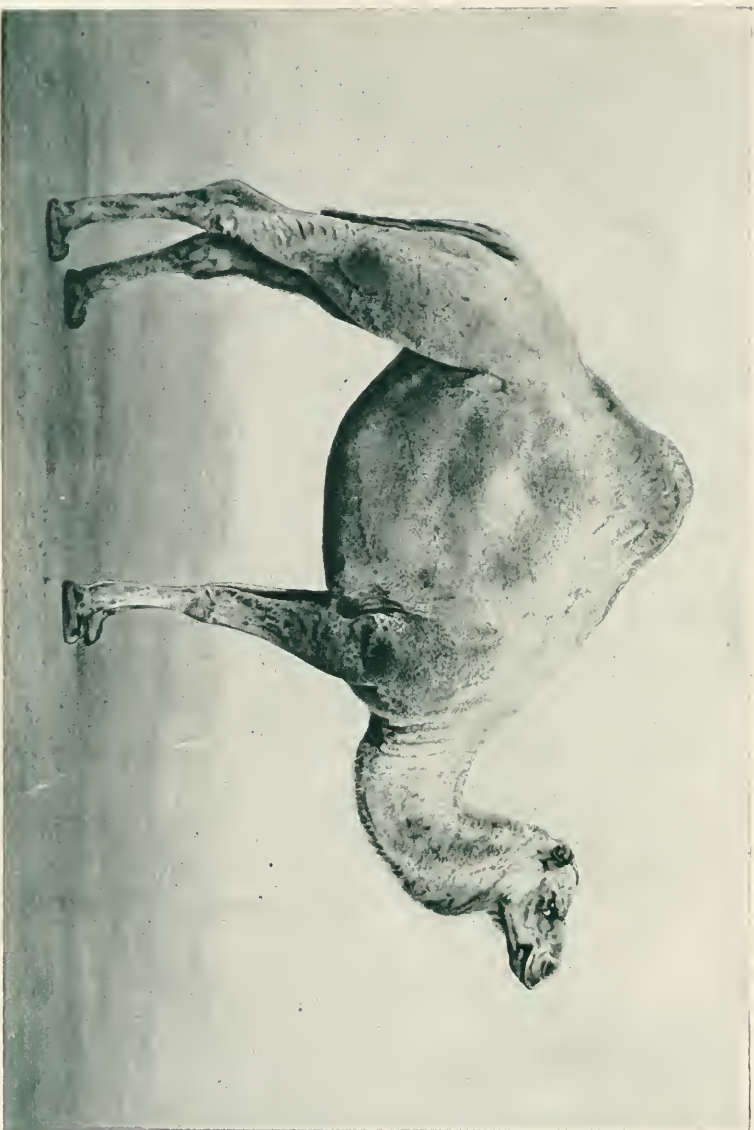
"There's a great deal of difference between an Arabian and a Bactrian Camel. You would like the Arabian or one-humped Camel best, for he's nicer-looking, and is more lightly built than the Bactrian gentleman, with shorter and silkier hair. Neither, to tell the truth, is very amiable, being always ready to bite when he can; but the Arab loves his Camel well, and would most likely say that when properly treated he's as good-tempered as any other beast."

"Which goes more quickly—a Camel or a Horse?" asked Val.

"A Horse, I should say, though Dromedaries, as riding Camels are called, can travel eight miles an hour for some time without fatigue. But a baggage Camel, when fully loaded, only covers some two to three miles an hour, and the slowest Cart-Horse goes faster than this. Camels are very uncomfortable to



Bactrian Camel



Dromedary

CAMELS AND LLAMAS

ride until you are used to them, owing to the way in which they move, both legs on one side being lifted and put down at the same time.

“The Bactrian Camel, with his two humps, is hardier than his Arabian brother, and a better climber. He is found in most of the desert regions of Central Asia, and can stand intense cold as well as great heat. The salt and bitter plants of the steppes, which no other animal will touch, are sweet to him, and if he happens to come across a brackish lake he takes deep draughts from it. When pressed for food he will eat anything—blankets and bones, hides, meat and fish, gobbling these down readily with the aid of his strong teeth. At the end of a long day's march he kneels to have his pack removed, just as he did to be loaded, the weight of his body being thrown on the thick elastic pads on his broad chest and the elbows of his fore-limbs. Kneeling is a Camel's natural position of rest, and all his knee-joints are protected in this way. Once he is free from his burden, I'm sorry to say he begins to quarrel with his neighbour, snapping savagely at him if he is tethered near. But I'm not surprised he feels out of temper when he has had such a tiring day! I dare say he's very hungry too, and when he has had his share of date leaves and hard black beans perhaps he becomes more sociable.

“If the Camel is the Ship of the Desert, another member of the Camel tribe, the Llama, or Guanaco,

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

of South America, might well be called the Ship of the Hills. Strictly speaking, Llamas are tame Guanacos. All their tribe are rather like Camels to look at, though they're very much smaller, and have no hump. Their pointed ears are considerably longer, and their feet quite narrow, with the toes more distinctly separated. A bushy stump of a tail, and long woolly hair, complete the Llama's list of attractions; but it is in his 'manners and customs' that he's most peculiar.

"His colour is usually white, or black and brown spotted on a white ground. He is a strong beast, and can carry burdens of all kinds over the steepest mountain pass. If kindly used, and not pressed too hard, he seems quite willing to work for man; but if he is teased, or some one too big and bulky tries to ride him, he turns round his head and—spits! This is his natural method of self-defence, and is a particularly nasty one, for he does it most effectively.

"The Guanaco, the Vicugna, and the Alpaca are all closely related, and live in the cold and temperate regions of South America. The graceful Vicugna—he has a pretty brown coat, which shades lighter underneath him—makes his home high up in the mountains of Peru. He runs in herds, and fights desperately with his rivals, giving and asking no quarter.

"In the pairing season a full-grown male Vicugna is often accompanied by from six to sixteen females.

CAMELS AND LLAMAS

These he sends on in front of him, while he walks some paces behind to guard against attack from the rear. If alarmed, he whistles shrilly, and drives his good ladies on before him at the swiftest pace they can manage until they are out of danger. Young males are only allowed to stay with their mothers for a certain time; when more young ones are born, they are firmly turned out of the herd, and have to shift for themselves."

The Grey Man was still talking about the Alpacas on the high tablelands of Southern Peru and Bolivia, which are sheared like sheep when their wool grows long, when Parkins came in with tea. It was long past five, and Milady's purr sounded very reproachful as she fixed her eyes on the cream jug.

CHAPTER XX

HOOFS AND HORNS

AFTER tea Val and Nancy played hide-and-seek in the great hall with Billy, who stowed himself away in the oddest corners, and barked delightedly when Val crawled after him on his hands and knees. Milady kept the Grey Man company, pressing herself against his breast as she heard him sigh.

"We got on quite well without them before," she purred, guessing that he was thinking how soon the twins would be gone. But the Grey Man sighed still. The days would seem so long again when no merry voices broke the silence of the afternoons.

He was staring out at the wintry landscape when Nancy and Val came back. They were both out of breath, and so was Billy, whose tail nearly wagged itself off.

"I say, what a splendid beast that is over the garden door!" cried Val. "That 'normous head with horns, I mean, and the pointed beard like Uncle John's."

"That's an American Bison, Val. I shot him after a tremendous chase on a wooded slope by the Rocky



Bison



Bison with Young

HOOFS AND HORNS

Mountains. As I was riding home again, I came suddenly on a Bison cow feeding her little calf. She would surely have heard my Fleetfoot's steps, but the ground was soft, and the wind was blowing a hurricane amongst the trees. The sight of a Bison is not very keen, but his hearing as a rule makes up for this."

"Did you shoot the mother one, too?" asked Val. And he was as glad as Nancy when the Grey Man shook his head.

"Only a week or so before," he said, "an old hunter had told me a story. He was stalking Grizzlies in a deep ravine, when he saw one some distance ahead of him spring out from a bush and make a rush at a baby Bison which was browsing on a patch of grass. At the sound of the Bear's rumbling growl, a cow Bison galloped up, and utterly regardless of her own safety, planted herself in front of her calf and stood at bay. The little one scampered off to the forest, and the Grizzly dodged round to follow it, since he didn't particularly care for the look of the mother's horns; but this she wouldn't allow, and charged at him. The unequal fight was ended by the hunter, whose bullet put an end to them both. The Grizzly was a very fine specimen; that rug by the East window was once his coat."

"The poor little calf must have been ever so lonesome without its mother!" sighed Nancy, who

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

wanted her own very badly to-day, though she could not have said just why.

"Poor little calf!" echoed the Grey Man, stroking her tangled curls. And then, in answer to one of Val's questions, he told them what terrific battles took place between the full-grown bull Bisons for the leadership of the herd.

"But what you would think more exciting still," he went on presently, "is the battle a Bison may have with Wolves if he ever gets stuck in the snow. They would not dare to attack him were he free to charge, or to kick out at them with his hoofs; but when their prying eyes see his plight, they are quick to take advantage of it. It's an even chance whether they tear him to pieces or he struggles free; if once he gets his footing they are soon punished for their temerity!

"Bison are found in some parts of Europe as well as in North America. They have been hunted so unmercifully that now there are very few of them left, though as late as thirty years ago they trod the prairies in tens of thousands. Most of those that remain have taken to the woods, where it is more easy for them to escape pursuit. I'm afraid that soon they'll be hunted out of existence, for not only is their flesh good to eat, but their hides and horns are used for many purposes.

"When Bison were more plentiful than now, the hunters would often partially surround a herd they

HOOFS AND HORNS

had surprised, and instead of troubling to shoot them down, drive them in a body toward the nearest precipice by making a frightful noise. With thundering hoofs the frightened beasts galloped on till they came to the edge of the cliff, when those in front were toppled over by the mad stampede of those behind. They could not stop if they would, for terror possessed them; and so it was that they died in hundreds. . . .

“There’s an animal called the Yak which resembles the Bison so far as his horns and the shape of his head are concerned, but he has very long hair on the lower part of his body, and at the end of his tail. He comes from the mountains of Tibet, and in the Highlands of the Inner Himalayas he is the only means of transport the people of these regions have. No glacier is too steep for him to climb, his large rounded hoofs finding foothold in some almost miraculous way, and he will breast the strongest currents of icy water at his master’s bidding, enjoying cold as much as he dislikes heat. Unfortunately he won’t eat corn, and this makes it very difficult to feed him on long marches.

“Tame Yak—these may be brown or white, though wild ones are usually black, with just a little white round the muzzle—have a curious grunting cry which is never heard from their free brothers. If they are ‘out of work’ for long, they grow rebellious when loaded once more, and try to

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

toss off their packs. But they have sense enough to know that men are stronger than they, and soon settle down again.

“Wild Llamas that wander among the highest peaks in herds of hundreds, have strict laws of their own, which they always follow. If they scent danger, both bulls and cows form a circle round their young ones, though, if a hunter comes very near, they think it wiser to fly! So off they scatter, running with their heads down and their tails held high in the air. They are such splendid climbers that, when in the hills, more often than not they escape.

“Among many other animals particularly useful to man are the Zebus, or Humped Cattle, of India and Africa. These may be big or little, for they vary a great deal in size; but they are always gentle, and ready to do any work required of them. If you were to see one you'd notice at once the ‘dewlap’—an enormous fold of skin—which hangs for the whole length of his neck, and his very large and drooping ears. A black Zebu is not uncommon, but the usual colour is light grey or cream colour. In India he draws the native carriages, and a certain number of the bulls are protected as sacred by some of the Hindus.

“The Bantin of Malaya is supposed to have been a far-away grandfather of the Zebu. His other name is the Javan Ox, and he makes his home in regions east of the Bay of Bengal, and in the islands of the

HOOFS AND HORNS

Malay Peninsula. The Malays keep him in large herds, using his flesh as beef, and a great deal of this is sent to Singapore. A Javan Bantin is black, with a conspicuous white patch behind, and more white at the end of his legs; in Burma his colour is usually a tawny chestnut.

“When I was in Holland, long ago, I was strolling round a big estate, when, to my surprise, I saw a Gayal, a Bantin, and a Blesbok grazing happily together in a field. These creatures, from countries so far apart—the Gayal probably came from Assam, though known in other parts of India, while the Blesbok is an Antelope from South Africa—had been brought to his country seat, near Amsterdam, by a gentleman much interested in animals, and were allowed the run of a big meadow bordered by the trees of his park. The Bantin seemed the shyest of the three—he turned aside his head as if meditating flight, and gave me a good opportunity to notice how curiously his thick horns were set, extending outward, with a straight line between their base.

“He is rather smaller than the Gaur of India, his near relation, and has generally white-clad limbs and a blackish-brown body. Indo-Chinese tribes keep him in herds, allowing him to roam the hill forests at will during the daytime so long as he returns at night to be stalled in the village. He’s a wonderful climber for his bulk, and makes his way where you would not think it would be possible for him to get.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

I don't think he is ever given any sort of work to do, being only used as food.

"Of all wild cattle, the Anoa, or Pygmy Buffalo, is the smallest, being often not more than about three feet high. He comes from the Island of Celebes, in Malaya, where he hides in the densest part of a wooded hill. It's said that no European has ever seen a wild one alive, so shy and retiring an animal is he; and some of the natives firmly declare that when he wants to sleep, he climbs a tree to be out of the way, instead of lying down on the ground. The Anoa is fond of standing knee-deep in streams and shallow rivers, and takes very long draughts, as Indian Buffaloes do, when he goes down to drink.

"An Anoa calf is a pretty little creature, with a woolly coat of thick golden or dark-brown hair, which is presently shed in masses of fleece. His grown-up coat is short-haired and almost black, and old bulls sometimes become quite bald all over! His horns are ringed, and sharply pointed; sometimes they grow to a length of fifteen inches, while the horns of a cow Anoa are always short."

And now the twins wanted to hear "about Sheep." Grandmother Blake had told them that morning of a dear wee Lamb she had had as a pet when she was a little girl, and neither of them had known before how interesting a Lamb could be.

"I thought sheep were stupid," Nancy confessed, "but Snowdrop—that was the name of Grannie's pet

HOOFS AND HORNS

—was as bright as bright could be. He *would* try to go for walks with her, just as Billy does with us, and once when he saw her start without him he broke through the hedge of the home field and ran after her down the road! And when he caught her up, he danced, and tucked his wet nose into her hand, to coax her to let him stay!”

“Sheep are supposed to have very little intelligence,” the Grey Man answered, “but sometimes they do things which show that they use their brains more than folks believe. A little girl who lives in Africa—her name is Betty, and I believe she’s very nice!—once told someone whom I knew well a quite true story about one of these animals. She liked it so much that she told it to me, and now you shall hear it, too.

“One day when Betty and a friend were riding along a country road, they noticed a Sheep running backward and forward over a sparkling stream. As they approached, she ran almost up to them, and then trotted back to the stream again, baa-ing. Here she stood, bleating piteously, and looking into their faces as if she were asking them to help her.

“Sure that something was wrong, Betty’s friend slipped off her pony, and went to find out what it was. At first she couldn’t see anything but a long green meadow, and a gurgling brook with tall grasses growing along its banks. But after a minute or two she caught sight of a little white head

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

popping out of a hole! It belonged to the poor mother's little ewe Lamb, and you should have heard her bleats of joy as it was gently lifted out of the brook and set beside her! The two of them scampered up the hill together, and Betty and her friend were very glad they had chanced to ride that way.

"There are endless varieties of Sheep, you know, and in many the ewes have horns as well as the rams. The Bighorns of the Rocky Mountains are a very handsome race, with a beautiful shining undergrowth of white fur beneath their reddish-brown coats. There are Black Bighorn in the Cassiar Mountains which post sentinels to keep guard while the rest of the herd graze, a practice quite common with Wild Sheep. This Bighorn is so marvellously agile that he has actually been known to leap down a precipice of 150 feet, and this without being killed.

"The finest specimen of the Sheep family I ever saw myself was the Maned Sheep of North Africa. I had barely sighted the big ram when he was off, to be lost in the distance within a minute! His mane was really very imposing, and extended right down his chest. His coat is very thick in winter, but so far as I know, no one tries to shear him!"

CHAPTER XXI

ANTELOPES AND DEER

I SHOULDN'T think that Maned Sheep of yours looked so very different from a Goat," said Val, between his third piece of cake and a chocolate éclair. The Grey Man's cook was really extremely clever in guessing what his visitors liked, and, for a would-be explorer, Val was very fond of good things.

"No—he didn't," answered the Grey Man, "and it would often be difficult to separate Goats from Wild Sheep if it were not for the strong and peculiar odour all male Goats have. But their skulls are differently shaped from those of Sheep, and Goats nearly always have beards. They are supposed to have existed long before Sheep, since their bones have been found farther down in the earth.

"The Ibex, which lives in the mountains of Italy, has huge horns curving over his back ; he is extremely strong and courageous, and if he can't get away from an enemy who is chasing him, makes a rush and tries to topple him over a cliff. I could tell you of many more beasts much like him, but you might grow tired of listening."

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

Val was pondering deeply as to whether he could eat another éclair—a pink one this time. Having regretfully decided that he couldn't, he turned his thoughts to Goats again.

"Is that the head of one over there?" he enquired, looking at the small, sharply-pointed horns.

"No—that belonged to an Oribi, Val—a pretty little African Antelope. He was only some two feet high at the shoulder, and his horns, as you see, are but a few inches long. His flesh is very good to eat, but difficult to get, for not only is he as fleet as the wind, but the colour of his foxy skin blends so well with the rocks of the hill-side that, unless he stands against the sky line, he is almost invisible.

"Most Antelopes, many of which might be confused with Goats, are particularly graceful creatures, their movements being so light and airy that they seem to skim over the ground. But the Gnulmor Wildebeest—that's his head by the bookcase—is certainly an exception to this! He has a wide short head with a very broad muzzle, fringed with bristles, and a large ungainly body. When he grows old, his horns form a sort of helmet for him, and make him look queerer still.

"Gnus, with their allies the Blesboks and Hartebeests, are confined to Africa, and the one whose head I brought home as a trophy, was almost the last beast I shot. When I sighted him, he was standing alone by a river-bank, staring straight



Gnu



Eland

ANTELOPES AND DEER

ahead ; his sharp ears soon told him someone was coming, and he whisked up his tail, took a leap in the air, and began to run round in a circle—as is the habit of Gnus when surprised.

“Gnus generally go in companies, and if chased on the plain, herd after herd circle wildly round the hunter, cutting the most extraordinary capers, and attacking his dogs with their horns. They are very swift, and would be hard to overtake if they were not so fond of antics. The Brindled Gnu is even odder to look at than his cousins ; he and the Haartebeest—so called from some fanciful resemblance to a Hart—have the same long melancholy faces.

“You must look at the Eland’s head on the staircase. He, too, belongs to Africa, and is the largest Antelope, being the size of an Ox. His horns, you’ll notice, twist round on themselves ; the cow has horns also, but hers are longer and thinner than the bull’s, and may not twist at all. She can run much faster than he, and if her little one is with her when she is chased by dogs, she will make a rush at them with her head down, impaling the nearest on her horns. Eland live in large herds, and in the woods as well as in the desert. Those that live in the desert can go a long time without drinking water, for the juicy melons they find on its borders satisfy their thirst.

“Though the Eland is such a big animal, many

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

of the Antelopes are very small. The Pigmy Antelope, one of the daintiest of little creatures, is seldom more than nine inches high, and Nancy would call it a 'fairy beast.'

"The handsomest Antelope I have ever seen is the Sable Antelope, with his splendid horns and a beautiful glossy black coat. The Roan Antelope, also only found in Africa, the chief home of Antelopes now—is another fine fellow, and larger still, while for grace, the Kudu and the Springbuck can't well be beaten. The Nilgai of India, the largest Antelope found in that land, is rather ungainly; he can readily be tamed, but the bull is very uncertain of temper, and turns savage when provoked."

"Tell us about that fellow over the door!" said Val, pointing to the head of a magnificent animal whose branching antlers, caught in a dancing gleam of firelight, spanned more than a yard across.

"That's a Wapiti. He belongs to the Deer Tribe, and used to inhabit most parts of the United States, Mexico, and British America, but now he's seldom met with save in the North American forests, or far up in the mountains of the Missouri River. Like the Bison and many other creatures, he has been almost hunted out of existence; he dies from quite a trivial wound, and in the days when his kindred still haunted the prairies they were slain in thousands by the Indians.

"Most of the Deer Tribe feed in the night, but



Wapiti

ANTELOPES AND DEER

Wapiti never do. The first gleaming bars of light in the sky are a signal to them to bestir themselves, and for some hours after dawn they feed steadily on leaves and twigs, or, in winter, on anything they can find. When the ground is covered with snow and there isn't a trace of green to be seen, a herd breaks up into small parties, each party seeking food on its allotted piece of ground. They gnaw away the bark of trees as far as they can reach, and are often hard put to it to live.

"At other times of the year they have food in plenty. When they have finished their morning feed, they go to sleep again; and this is the time when the hunters find it easiest to approach them. If undisturbed, they doze until the close of the afternoon, when once more they begin to eat, and go on until dusk. It sounds a peaceful life, doesn't it, Nancy? But when August comes, and the stags have put on their new antlers—Wapiti shed theirs every year, about December—there are terrible battles between them, and the hinds must have many anxious moments, unless they enjoy being fought over.

"The stag at this season gives a shrill whistling cry that carries for miles. If he is only just full grown, and has, as yet, no hinds of his own to follow meekly behind him, he challenges the ruler of the first herd he meets, and both prepare for war. With heads well lowered between their forefeet, the rivals rush at

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

each other savagely, the clashing of their antlers re-echoing through the woods. The weaker of the two usually retreats, bellowing loudly, but sometimes they fight to the death.

“The hinds are very gentle creatures unless some other animal of the wilds, such as a Coyote, a Bear, or a Puma, take a fancy to a little fawn, and thinks to make a meal of it. Then the mother Wapiti fights with the utmost fierceness, calling any of her friends within earshot to help her by a sharp and peculiar cry of distress. They come like a flash, and the intruder is quickly driven off. It needs a very stout-hearted Grizzly to face those flashing hoofs.

“The Elk, or Moose, a long-legged and somewhat awkward animal, is the largest member of the Deer family now living. He ranges over parts of Europe and of North America, and is called in the latter the Moose. The antlers of a full male specimen may weigh as much as fifty pounds, though on rare occasions he does not carry more than three or four simple tines. ‘What is a tine?’ A prong or spike of an antler, boy; I’ll tell you presently how antlers grow.

“In ancient days there were Elk in Great Britain, and remains of the giant Irish Elk have often been found in peat bogs. He is growing rare now, not only in parts of Europe where he was once common, but even in the forests of North America. It was in that country that I first saw him, and the more I knew of him, the more I found there was to know.

ANTELOPES AND DEER

“Elk commonly feed upon leaves and twigs, though lichens and mosses attract them, too, when they are to be had. One winter day I was riding through a thick belt of trees, when a sudden turn took me round a corner, and full in view of an enormous Elk in the very act of pushing down a tree that he might get at its upper boughs. He had straddled his forelegs on either side of the slender trunk, and by pressing his weight against it would have had it on the ground in a few minutes. I was well behind him, but his sharp nose told him instantly that someone was near, and he disappeared so swiftly and silently that, but for the staggering tree, I might have wondered if I had been dreaming.

“Once heard, the call of an Elk bull at pairing time is never forgotten. He sheds his antlers in January, and all through the spring and early summer, until his new ones are fully grown, he hides himself in marshy swamps, feeding on the leaves of yellow water-lilies, and carefully shunning the rest of his kind.

“But when his antlers are in all their glory, spreading so far and so high that he has to throw his head well back when he seeks the heart of the wood, lest their branches should become entangled in the trees, he goes forth to war, his deep eyes burning with sombre fires, and his swinging limbs proof against all fatigue. His bellowing roar is answered soon by the bell-like call of an Elk cow; but often

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

before he can get to her he is confronted by a rival. The Elk fights as fiercely as the Red Deer or Wapiti, and his antlers may become so tightly locked in his adversary's that they cannot be separated from each other. Then the cow goes off, to become the property of another Elk, while those that fought for her favour slowly starve to death."

Nancy looked very troubled at this, and her brow did not clear till the Grey Man began to talk of Elk babies.

"In the spring," he said, "the cow goes right away by herself, to the most sheltered spot she can find. This will very likely be a wooded island in the midst of some deep river or lake, where she feels that the little one coming to her will be safe from Wolves and hungry Grizzlies. Her fawn, or fawns, for she may possibly have twins, are a pretty soft brown, sometimes slightly dappled; and in their defence she will even attack a man. There's nothing she will not do for her baby—it comes before everything else, and while it is young she gives all her thought to it."

"All mothers seem like that," said Val, with a twinkle in his merry eyes. "And of course the smaller their babies are, the more care they have to take of them. . . . Nancy and I were turned out of the herd directly our new one came, and we're not to go back till the holidays are over, so that we shan't disturb it!"



Elk, or Moose



Moluccan Deer

ANTELOPES AND DEER

"O Val!" cried Nancy, her soft lips quivering, for she always felt homesick when twilight came. Just for a minute Val was afraid that she was going to cry.

"You *are* a little silly!" he said affectionately, and Billy tried to lick her nose, while the Grey Man hugged her. So she laughed instead, and the Grey Man told them about Deer called "Sambar" that only come out to feed when it's dark, though sometimes they may be seen in the very early morning.

"Sambar are the woodland-deer of South-eastern Asia," he went on, "and are very fond of wild fruits. The old stags make a tremendous noise at pairing times, and often start bellowing in the middle of the night. There are several Sambar-like Deer in the Malay Islands, and one of these, the Moluccan Deer, I caught napping down by a creek. I was on foot, but he must have been very fast asleep not to hear the grass rustle as I trod, since the hearing of all Deer is very keen. Once his eyes were open, however, he vanished as quickly as that Elk did, and was lost in a moment amid the trees.

"While we're talking of Deer, I must certainly tell you about the Reindeer, or Caribou; wonderful creatures that live in herds which sometimes number thousands. Wild Reindeer are unknown to-day except in the northern regions of the East and West, but once upon a time they lived in many other parts of the world. Their bones have been found beside

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

those of the Mammoth under cave floors, very deep down, and some of the very first pictures men ever drew were of the Reindeer that kept them company. These pictures were engraved upon stones and walls, and sometimes on tusks and horns.

“Reindeer must have been among man’s earliest animal friends, and no doubt were as useful to the people who, long before the Ancient Britons were in existence, lived on the land that is now ours, as they are to-day to the little Lapps, who would scarcely know what to do without them. Milk to drink and flesh to eat, hair to weave into cloth, and hide to make tents and shoes, sinews for cord, sharp bones for needles and knives, and oil for keeping the lamps alight; all these are obtained from the Reindeer by man. For hours at a time, without seeming tired, a Reindeer carries his master and a big load besides, as quickly as a Horse can trot; and the wealth of a Finn or a Lapp is reckoned by the number of Reindeer that he possesses.

“We don’t know as much as we might about the Wild Reindeer, for in countries where he lives people are more anxious to kill or make use of him than they are to study his ways. But in Spitzbergen he has been carefully watched, and Walrus-hunters say that in late autumn he leaves the grassy plains of the ice-free valleys where he has spent the summer, and goes down to the shore, sometimes in herds of hundreds, to feed on a particular kind of



Reindeer



Fallow Deer

ANTELOPES AND DEER

seaweed. About this time he is 'as fat as butter,' and very good eating when killed. As winter approaches, he makes for the mountain heights, where he weathers the coldest of bitter blasts, and lives upon moss and lichen. Spring is the most trying season for him, for then the mountain sides are so slippery that he can scarcely get anything to eat at all. Nevertheless, I expect he is happy still, for he's free to go where he will.

"Quite as grand in their own way as the Reindeer are the Red Deer still found at Exmoor and in the Scottish Highlands. They were common all over England once, and still are in many temperate regions of Europe and Western Asia. Their antlers are often magnificent; for though, like all animals belonging to the Deer Tribe, they shed these every year, each time they grow again they increase in size.

"When a stag has lost his antlers, he hides himself, for he'd rather not fight with anyone then! As the new bone grows, it is very tender, and Nature covers it with skin to protect it for him until it is hard. This skin, through which throb numberless veins and arteries, is called 'velvet,' because it's so soft; and when his antlers have finished growing, the stag rubs off his velvet against a tree, for he has no more need of it. At this time all stags are inclined to be vicious, and none of the wood-things would dare interfere with them."

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"Aren't there Deer in some of our English parks?" Val questioned. "Daddy said he would take us to see the Deer at Richmond. I shall ask him when we go home."

"I think you'll find those are Fallow Deer, boy; there are many of these in Epping Forest, too. Originally they came from the North-west of Africa, and countries that border on the Mediterranean, but they flourish in Europe now. They are pretty creatures, and grow very tame. I have often watched the bucks knocking chestnuts off the boughs for themselves and their lady loves to feast on. No female deer have horns, you know, except the Reindeer, so the hinds can't do this for themselves. . . . Why, the car is here already, Nancy! Good-bye, and come back as soon as you can—I am sorrier every day to let you go."

CHAPTER XXII

ANIMALS THAT GNAW

IT had been a lovely morning. The twins had spent it in the woods, finding fairy dells and "secret ways" amidst the moss-grown paths. The last year's leaves beneath their feet were crisp and glistening with frost, and through the trees that waved above, the sky shone very blue and clear.

Now and then, tempted out by the bright winter sunshine, a Squirrel left some cosy nook to seek his hoard of huts, and Nancy exclaimed with delight when a cunning little fellow balanced himself before her on a spangled bough, his head on one side as he tried to think where he had stored his treasure. He was gone before her "Oh!" had ended—a flash of red-brown through the naked branches; and Val reproachfully explained that if she wanted "to see things," she must always keep very still.

The Grey Man heard all about the Squirrel when they went to see him that afternoon.

"He almost flew!" said Nancy earnestly; "just as if his feet had wings."

"One of his cousins in the Northern Hemisphere really does 'fly,'" the Grey Man told her, "instead

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

of wings, he has a membrane of tough skin along the side of his body, attached to his toes and wrists, and another which joins his neck with his forelimbs at both sides. So when he stretches out his 'arms and legs,' as you would call them, he has a nice little sail to catch the wind, and can swoop down sixty feet at a bound. Flying Lemurs have these membranes too, and this is why they can take such marvellous leaps from a tree to the ground, alighting from a branch some two hundred feet distant as softly as a bird.

"But though the Squirrel we know in England has only his tiny feet to carry him, he's so nimble and quick that it really does seem as if these must be winged. Val's quite right, Nancy—you must be as quiet as a little mouse if you mean to see much of the wood-things! I remember once watching a Squirrel at work, and though I was hidden behind a bush, I dare not so much as take a deep breath for fear of disturbing him.

"He was building his nest. Unlike a bird, a Squirrel builds from inside instead of out, and I wanted to see how he managed. Having carefully collected a heap of twigs between the fork of a bough, he plunged himself into the midst of these, and I could only guess what he was doing. Later on, when he had gone off to refresh himself after his exertions, I had a look at his handiwork, and was quite amazed at his skill. The twigs of which



Porcupine



Hare

ANIMALS THAT GNAW

the nest was made were so beautifully woven in and out that the rain would have no chance of getting through, and the floor was daintily covered with moss, which made quite a pretty carpet. There were two holes—one at the bottom and one at the side, so that he could escape quickly from an unwelcome visitor. The whole thing was so like a bundle of twigs to look at outside that I should never have known what it was if I had not seen him working at it.

“Squirrels belong to the Rodents, or Gnawing Mammals, and in all this order the teeth are specially formed for rasping and gnawing. Hares and Rabbits, Rats and Mice, Marmots and Voles, Beavers and Porcupines, are some of the many Rodents you will hear of when you study natural history. Each has two pairs of chisel-like front teeth, faced with very hard enamel, which preserves their cutting edge.”

“I know something about a Porcupine,” said Val. “He lived in a hollow tree at the end of Grandmother’s garden, and one day, when Daddy was quite little, the Porcupine stayed up later than usual ’cause he found so much to eat. And Daddy’s dog, Champion, who always looked round the garden in the early mornings to hunt stray cats, was angry that he hadn’t gone to bed, and said, ‘I’ll teach you to trespass here!’

“The Porcupine didn’t mind a bit. He only

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

grunted very loudly, and spread out his quills and turned his back. Then Champion rushed at him, angrier than ever; and he got his mouth full of quills! They hurt most dreadfully, and left such sore places when the gardener pulled them out."

"That's the Porcupine's favourite way of defending himself," laughed the Grey Man, "and his quills come out quite easily. By turning his back, he protects his nose, which is his only tender spot. Next to the Beaver, he is the largest Rodent in the Old World, and he gets his funny name from his habit of grunting. *Porc-épin* is French, and means 'Spiny-pig.'

"When I was a boy—just about your age, Val—I found a family of young Porcupines in a cave on the hill-side. They were the funniest little things, with wide-open eyes, and soft white spines. Our game-keeper told me that they'd make quite good eating if baked in hot ashes in a hole in the ground, but I was glad to leave them to their mother! It was only just after daybreak, and she was still prowling round to look for food. Porcupines feed chiefly on roots, but they are fond of fruit and vegetables. The moisture they find in these makes it easy for them to go without water if the springs and pools near their homes run dry.

"The Tree Porcupine, one of the New World varieties, is rather like a little bear, for his quills, which Red Indians use to deck their heads with, are

ANIMALS THAT GNAW

almost hidden by his thick hair. He lives on bark, and kills off whole forests of trees in Canada by stripping them of this. You would be surprised to see how neatly he does it, beginning from the top of a tree and working down to the bottom.

“But clever as he is with those strong teeth of his, the Beaver leaves him far behind. Many years ago this animal built in most of the rivers of Europe, including those of Great Britain; but he was so cruelly hunted for his fur that it is practically only in North America and Canada that he is to be met with now. He would be rather like an enormous Water Rat except for his tail, which is flat, and covered with scales instead of hair. When he swims or dives, he uses it to steer with, and a very good rudder it makes.

“In the spring, when the woods burst into leaf, and all the birds are singing, he and his mate and little ones leave their winter lodge in the bed of the river and scramble up on a flowery bank. Most likely he goes off to explore, for he's rather fond of adventures; but Mother Beaver and her babies stay behind, to roam the woods and feast on young shoots and juicy roots. Such frolics the young ones have in their green playground! But their mother keeps a sharp look out for fierce Wild Cats and other foes that might lie in wait for them.

“Before the leaves show signs of falling, something in the air warns Father Beaver that winter is on its way, and he hurries back to rejoin his family.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

Very soon, on a moonlight night, the Beavers gather on the river bank, intent upon strengthening their dams and houses, so that the frost may not take them unawares. The first thing to be done is to fell some trees.

“Young saplings are easily gnawed through, but to fell a big tree, with a trunk as thick as a man's body, is another thing. When the Beaver wants such a big tree as this, if possible he chooses one that overhangs the water. Lifting himself up as high as he can, he uses his teeth as a chisel, and cuts deeply all round the bark as far as he can reach. A little lower down, say some three or four inches, he gnaws a second ring, and then works away between the two to bite out the wood, splinter by splinter, until the tree has quite a ‘waist.’ When this is sufficiently slender, he scuttles away, knowing that the tree will fall at the next gust of wind. Once it is down, if it does not quite overhang the water, he and his fellow Beavers drag it to the river's edge, and push it into the stream. Very likely he swims beside it, guiding it to the spot where his building is going on. Beavers begin their tree-cutting above the point where the wood is wanted, so that it may float with the current.

“A Beaver's house, or winter lodge, is about a yard high, and some eight feet across. It is built of stones and branches and logs, thickly plastered over with mud, which freezes hard when winter

ANIMALS THAT GNAW

comes, and keeps out Wild Cats and Wolverenes. The bottom of the hut is of course under water, and two separate tunnels lead from it to different levels of the stream. Near one of these tunnels the Beaver hides a store of twigs and bark, under a large stone. This is his larder, for not until spring comes round again will he leave his hut. The air gets into it through tiny holes that he has left in the roof.

“He is much too wise to take chance for anything if he can help it, and since he knows—how, I couldn’t tell you!—that in a dry season the river sinks, he builds a dam across the stream, just as an engineer would, so that there may always be sufficient water round his house. A railway embankment in Canada was once almost washed away because some Beavers in a neighbouring river built such a large dam that the water flooded the banks. Over and over again the railwaymen cut the dam, and fifteen times those busy little workers immediately repaired it! At last they seemed to know that it was of no use, and went off to build somewhere else.

“The Coypu, sometimes called the Beaver Rat, is a smart little fellow too. He’s about the size of the Beaver, and remarkably like him, but his tail is that of an ordinary rat. Instead of building a hut, he burrows in the banks of the lakes and rivers in South America if these are high enough; if not, he makes a ‘platform-like’ nest amongst

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

the reeds. His burrow is usually between three and four feet long, and branches off at its further end into a nice little room two feet across.

“Here the mother Coypu makes a nest of water weeds for her babies, of which she may have as many as eight or nine. On summer nights she takes them out for a swim, and they all try to scramble on to her back, uttering mournful cries! They are very nervous little creatures, and as if to help them hide themselves, Nature has made them the colour of mud, so that when curled up on the river bank they only look like small mounds of earth. They feed on the seeds, leaves, and roots of water plants as a rule, but sometimes, it’s said, they eat shellfish.

“Coypus are often hunted, as their lovely soft under-fur, known as ‘nutria,’ is almost as much worn as beaver. They are usually caught when they sport in the water, and the hunters try to lasso them with ropes before shooting at them, since the moment a Coypu is dead, his body sinks. Traps are set for them too, for when on land they are always on their guard against surprise. The tiniest sound, and they crowd close together, to dart off next moment into the stream.

“A Rodent known all over the world is the timid Hare, with his long ears and very long hindlegs. Leverets—young Hares—are born fully clothed, and with their eyes wide open. They can run about



Patagonian Hare

ANIMALS THAT GNAW

from the very first, unlike young Rabbits, which come into the world quite blind and naked. But then a Rabbit has his warm burrow to hide in, while a Hare always lives in a 'form,' as we call the patch of flattened grass, or the sheltered side of a rock or stone, where he goes to rest. He changes his 'form' from time to time, as if he didn't want other wood-folk to know where he might be found."

"Hares are almost as quick as Squirrels," said Val. "One day I saw one behind a fern, and he didn't stir till I got close to him—s'pose he thought I hadn't any eyes! But when I put out my hand to touch him, he gave a jump, and just disappeared."

"There's a cousin of his called the Jumping Hare that puts his exploits in the shade," the Grey Man answered. "He is found in various parts of Africa and America, and can take most extraordinary leaps. He lives in a burrow, sharing it with several families, and never comes out except at night. In the rainy season he stays there altogether, for he doesn't like getting wet. The natives know this, and when they want a Jumping Hare for supper, all they have to do is to pour some water down his hole, and wait for him to rush out!"

"What a pity he doesn't bite them!" said Nancy to Milady, and Milady purringly agreed. The twins were not to know that long, long ago she had caught a baby Hare herself!

CHAPTER XXIII

SLOTHS, ANT-EATERS, AND ARMADILLOS

THERE were quite new cakes for tea that day—little round ones, iced a deep orange yellow, with crystallized scraps of orange on the top. Val looked at them wistfully and turned away. He had had a whole day of toothache.

"Sometimes I wish," he said quite sadly, "that I'd been born a hen. A hen hasn't any teeth, you see. I s'pose all animals have."

"Not all, Val. There's one special 'order,' or group of families, in which none have front teeth of any kind, and some no teeth at all! The Sloth of South America, for instance, has only cheek teeth, while the jaws of Ant-eaters and Armadillos are as toothless as the beak of your hen.

"The only time I ever saw an Aï, or Three-toed Sloth, was when I was hunting in Venezuela. He was sitting on a forked bough with his head bent forward, and his arms tightly grasping the slender trunk of the low tree on which he happened to be. When my native guide cried, "Aï! Aï," and pointed upward, I expected to find him hanging back down-



Sloth



Ant-eater

SLOTHS, ANT-EATERS, ARMADILLOS

ward from a branch, though I learnt afterward that he never did this while living wild unless moving about or feeding. What astonished me most was to see how marvellously his hairy coat blended with the bark of the tree—it was just the same dull brownish green, and when I got near enough I found that there was a curious vegetable growth on his thick coarse hairs! This is generally the case with Sloths, and helps to make them almost invisible among the trees.

“After a minute or so, the Aī seemed to think that I had looked at him long enough, so with very great caution he lowered himself, holding on to a branch with his long curved claws. He was now in the position I had thought he ought to have been, and he moved so slowly from one bough to another that he might have been some animal in a fairy-tale that a witch had laid under a spell. I purposely made a noise, but he did not seem to hear, and his small reddish eyes were dull and sleepy, as if he were still in a dream.

“The Aī feeds on leaves, and when he has stripped one particular tree, he climbs down to the ground, in order to get to a new one. He makes his way by leaning one arm on the ground, and feeling round with the other as far as he can reach until he finds something into which he can hook his claws, when he drags his body forward. An engineer who studies his habits says that it takes an Aī some seven or eight hours to travel five hundred yards on the ground, so impossible is it

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

for him to use his limbs as other animals do. There's a Two-toed Sloth with much the same habits; he's known as the Unau; and Hoffman's Unau has a cry like the bleat of a sheep.

"Ages ago there were Giant Sloths that lived on the ground, and weighed several tons! Buried beneath a cave in Patagonia were found portions of hide, covered with coarse shaggy hair, as well as the bones of such a monster, and the remains of other huge Ground Sloths have been discovered in different parts of South America. One of these beasts must have been as big as an Elephant, and since they lived on our earth with early man, it was a good thing for him that they only ate green things, as we can tell by their teeth. Most likely they dragged the branches to them by supporting themselves against a trunk on their hind limbs and reaching upward with their arms; or perhaps they pulled the tree down bodily, as they easily could with their great strength. The Ground Sloth dug up from that cave in Patagonia was evidently killed by man, for his bones show signs of having been hacked at by some sharp instrument.

"It was through finding skeletons like his that we learnt another of Nature's secrets—that in by-gone days of the world Sloths were closely related to Ant-eaters! It is very unlikely we should have guessed this, for they look as different as can be; but the ancient Sloths, as shown by their remains,

SLOTHS, ANT-EATERS, ARMADILLOS

buried under the earth for many thousands of years, had backbones, limbs, and tails like Ant-eaters! Your father is sure to take you some day to the Natural History Museum, and there, among other interesting things, you'll find the complete skeleton of an enormous Ground Sloth leaning against a tree."

"Does an Ant-eater *really* eat Ants?" asked Val, who thought this a curious taste.

"Why, of course he does! He gets at them by tearing open an Ant-hill with his strong claws, which are so long and sharp that he can't put his forefeet flat to the ground, but has to turn them sideways as he walks. When the Ants rush out to see who has dared to destroy their work—and White Ants, or Termites, are very fierce creatures—the Great Ant-eater licks them up in their hundreds, his long tongue, coated with sticky saliva, darting in and out like a lively worm. His mouth is just a little hole at the end of his slender tapering head, and he hasn't a single tooth in it. He belongs to the edentate or toothless class.

"As his name will tell you, he is the largest of the true 'Ant-Eaters,' though the Aard Vark, or Ant-Bear of Africa, who belongs to another family of the same order, is six feet long when fully grown. The great Ant-Eater makes his home in the tall grass of some low-lying swamp in South or Central America, for he always likes the neighbourhood of water. He has hair very much longer than any of his kindred, that of his tail forming quite a mane. Whenever he takes

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

his walks abroad this tail is carried stretched fully out, and he's then about six or seven feet long. When he sleeps, he folds himself tidily up, his legs neatly placed together, his head buried deep in the hair of his bosom, and his tail curled round the rest of him. A mother Ant-eater carries her baby on her back, just as the Sloth does, and suckles it for several months.

"The Tamandua, or Lesser Ant-eater, is a much smaller animal, and his 'prehensile' tail—you know what this means!—looks like that of a big rat. He lives almost entirely up in the trees, often climbing to the very top. If driven into a corner, he faces his enemy bravely, and tries to crush him in the grip of his strong arms. The Great Ant-eater defends himself in the same way, and the natives insist that, if put to it, he will attack a Jaguar.

"There's a Pygmy, or Two-toed Ant-eater, just about the size of a rat, which looks quite like a Sloth as he clings to the boughs, using his claws as well as the handy prehensile tail which neither the Sloth nor the Great Ant-eater possess. All Ant-eaters sleep by day and wander about by night, and even by natives this Pygmy is seldom seen, since he lives in the densest forests of tropical America. He sits up like a Squirrel to feed when he has a nice fat Bee or Wasp to eat; but Ants are his favourite food."

Billy growled. *His* "favourite food" was buttered toast, and the master he loved was scrunching away without offering him a single bit!

SLOTHS, ANT-EATERS, ARMADILLOS

"I think I'll explore South America as well as Africa," said Val, when Billy had been appeased. "I might find out a quite new animal, you know."

"That's what an American did, some ninety years ago, boy. Ever heard of Armadillos. 'No?' Well, they differ from all other living mammals by having a number of bony plates on their skin, which form a kind of shield, or mantle; though Pangolins, found in Asia and Africa, and equally curious creatures in their own way, are completely covered from head to tail by scales made of hairs so tightly woven together as to be as firm as horn. Well, several varieties of Armadillos were already well known, but even the natives of Argentina, where he was found, had not heard of the tiny Pichiciago, one of the smallest members of this curious group. He only measures five inches or so, and his discoverer named him the Pink Fairy Armadillo.

"You would like him to play with, Nancy, for he is as dainty as he is quaint. His hair is beautifully soft and silky, and pure snow white, while his head and the upper part of his little body are covered with a pink shield of horny scales, underlain with thin bony plates. This shield fits closely over him behind, as if to make sure that nothing should take him unawares. He only comes out from his burrow at night, when he wanders amongst the brushwood and cacti of sandy dunes.

"The Pink Fairy's tail is as still as can be, and

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

when walking, he drags it on the ground behind him, planting his feet down flatly on their soles, and moving so deliberately that you might think you had only to put out your hand and pick him up.

“But let him catch the faintest sound, and he'll very soon show you what he can do! A moment suffices for him to scrape a tiny hole with his forefeet; this done, he sticks the point of his stiff tail into the ground so that with his forefeet it forms a tripod, and supporting his weight on this, with his hind feet left free, he digs out the sand as quick as lightning! It is not exaggerating to say so, for before the horseman who spies him has time to fling himself out of his saddle, the Pink Fairy Armadillo vanishes out of sight as if he had been spirited away. He is one of the quickest burrowers in the world, and seldom leaves any trace in the sand to show where he has been at work.”

CHAPTER XXIV

SOME ANIMALS IN AUSTRALIA

VAL had a curious dream that night. He thought he must have somehow become a Fairy Armadillo, for he seemed, as he told the Grey Man next day, to be able to burrow deep down in the earth, and "as quick as lightning."

"I had nearly come out at the other side of the world," he added, "when Nancy came in and woke me. She said there was a Robin on the window-sill, and didn't I want to see him!"

"And he *was* so cross," sighed Nancy, meaning Val. "He said I'd spoilt the most exciting dream he'd ever had."

"So you did!" Val began reproachfully; but stopped to listen as the Grey Man spoke.

"If you had come out 'at the other side of the world,'" he said, "you would have found yourself in Australia, the home of the Pouched Mammals, or 'Marsupials,' as they are called. It is only the mothers, of course, who have pouches. The Kangaroo belongs to this order, and he used to be my favourite animal when I was small."

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"Daddy showed us a picture of him," said Nancy. "It was in a paper that came from across the seas. And he told us that though he looked so big, once upon a time he'd been ever so tiny, and was carried everywhere in his mother's pouch."

"A baby Kangaroo is scarcely more than an inch long when he is born," said the Grey Man," and he's white and soft, like nearly transparent jelly! His mother pops him straight into her pouch, which is low down on the underside of her warm body, and there he stays for many months. Even when he is strong enough and big enough to come out and nibble beside her, he jumps back again at the slightest sound, glad to take refuge in his safe shelter.

"I don't know what would happen to him if it were not for that cosy pouch, for his little legs would never carry him the great distances his mother often has to go for water during a long drought, when the burning sun shines more fiercely each day, and the looked-for rain doesn't come."

"His mother must be awfully fond of him," Val remarked thoughtfully. "Else she'd get tired of having him always with her, and would tumble him out on the ground."

"The only time she does that, Val, is if she is almost at her last gasp, and there is no other chance of saving his life. This happens sometimes; for Kangaroos, who eat the grass that colonists want for their sheep and cattle, are frequently hunted by



Kangaroo and young



Kangaroo

SOME ANIMALS IN AUSTRALIA

packs of dogs trained specially to run them down, and then it is that though seeming cruel his mother is doing her best for him.

“A settler in New South Wales once told me that nothing would induce him to set his dogs on a Kangaroo again. Not long before I met him he had taken part in a great Kangaroo hunt, following the hounds on horseback ; and a mother Kangaroo, with her youngster in her pouch, gave them a fine run. At length the poor thing became exhausted, and her one thought now was to save her child. Shooting him out of her pouch into a thick bush, she bounded away in quite an opposite direction, crossing right in front of the dogs in order to lead them off his scent. They soon came up with her, and she was killed ; but when they went back to look for her young one, the little thing had escaped into the bush. The huntsmen would not let them follow his trail, but called them off and went home.

“Kangaroos stay with their mothers as a rule until they are strong enough to run and leap ; then they leave them, and form a ‘mob,’ or ‘drove’ of their own. Each drove of Kangaroos is headed by a chosen leader, and confines itself to a certain district, browsing there on green sprouts of low-growing shrubs, and grass and heather. The smaller members of the Kangaroo tribe called Wallabies sometimes eat roots as well. While a ‘Boomer,’ often measures over five feet from the tip of his nose

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

to the root of his tail, which is itself some fifty-two inches long, the largest Wallaby is only about two-thirds this size, while one is no bigger than a Hare.

“The Boomer, you must know, is the big Grey Kangaroo, the largest of all the Kangaroo tribe; sometimes he’s also called the ‘Old Man,’ while his young one is always a ‘Joey.’ It was a full-grown Boomer that caused so much surprise to the crew of the famous Captain Cook in the eighteenth century. They had landed at the mouth of a river in New South Wales to lay in stores of food, and couldn’t think what to make of this queer animal, whose hindlegs were so enormous in comparison with his tiny forelegs, and who sat upright to stare at them, balancing himself by his tail. When they tried to approach him closely, he bounded away as if he were on springs, covering so much ground at every leap that he soon left them far behind. A hunting party set out immediately to make his further acquaintance; and no doubt they had a very long chase before they could get near enough to hail him.

“The Boomer, and other big Kangaroos, of which there are many varieties, fight desperately for their lives, though on ordinary occasions they are timid as sheep, and never interfere with anyone. When driven to bay by dogs, a Kangaroo sits up defiantly, and strikes out so fiercely with his hind feet, that no dog can approach him without running the risk of being ripped open. Whenever possible, he takes to the

SOME ANIMALS IN AUSTRALIA

water, and as the dogs come up with him he catches each in turn with his forepaws, holding him under until he is drowned. I heard of a Boomer that swam two miles across an arm of the sea, though part of the time both wind and current were against him, and left his pursuers far behind.

“A very curious Kangaroo lives in the dense tropical forests of Queensland and New Guinea. His hair is a beautiful glossy black instead of reddish or grey, and there’s very little difference between the size of the hind and the fore legs, which is strange for a Kangaroo. Instead of running about the scrub, or bounding over open plains, this Tree Kangaroo lives up in the boughs, sleeping on a strong bough, with his drooping head sheltered between his forepaws. When he’s climbing, his very long tail is used as a sort of balancing pole, for he can make it as stiff as he pleases. He eats ferns and fruit, and the leaves of creepers ; and the natives eat him—when they can !

“Sometimes they catch him when he’s asleep, and quietly slip him into a bag before he knows what is happening ; or perhaps they spy him out when he’s awake, from a tree rather higher than the one he’s camping in. Once they’ve seen him, they clamber to the ground again, and build a fence of cane and brushwood round the trunk of his resting-place. This done, the most venturesome native climbs up to drive him down, while others wait at the foot of the tree to drag him out by his tail when

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

he lands inside the enclosure in leaping away from his unwelcome visitors. He is killed then with a nulla-nulla, which I fancy must be a very stout club, before he has time to strike at them with his powerful claws. A Mapi—that's the native name for him—will sometimes jump from a tree sixty feet or so in height, and reach the ground unhurt.

“The Kangaroo Rat is a dear little thing, with a tail he can do what he likes with. His nest is built on the ground, and often he has to fetch the materials for it from quite long distances. When he has collected sufficient dry leaves and grasses, he makes them into a neat little bundle, round which he curls the tip of his tail, and then hops merrily away. He sleeps all day, so for a long time no one noticed this funny little trick of his.

“Another pouched animal, found in Australia and Tasmania, is the Wombat. He's about three feet in length, and looks like a small and grumpy Bear, shuffling along in the same way. He, too, is a 'creature of the night,' for he does not leave his burrow until after dark, when he comes out to feed on grass and roots. His claws are very strong and powerful, which they need to be, since he digs for his living; and his teeth, which resemble the Rodents', have no roots, and go on growing all his life.

“But though he can bite if he's interfered with, he would really much rather not, for nowadays he isn't a fighter. In the earlier times of the earth's history



Wombat

SOME ANIMALS IN AUSTRALIA

there were Wombats fully as big as Tapirs, for enormous skeletons of such monsters have been found not so very far down in the earth. You wouldn't like to have met them, Nancy; even Val might have run away!"

"The 'Possum comes from Australia, doesn't he?" enquired Val, who had read a funny story about one only the other day.

"Yes—he's another of the Pouched Mammals and lives in the branches of trees. He and his Tasmanian cousin are rather like little Foxes, and they both have those nice 'prehensile' tails that must be so extremely useful. When somebody's after him, an Opossum hangs on to a bough by the tip of his tail, trusting to luck that he won't be seen if he keeps still and stiff. As a matter of fact, he is so much the colour of the surrounding branches that often he's not discovered. If he is, he's so nimble and quick that it's no easy matter to catch him; a 'Possum is said to have more lives than a cat, since even when his bones have been broken, and he is left for dead, he'll get up presently and walk away when he thinks that the coast is clear. 'Playing 'Possum,' you know, means pretending to be dead when you are not; and the way he can succeed in taking in the wisest dog often makes his hunters smile.

"When a mother 'Possum's baby is born, she puts it into her pouch, just as a Kangaroo does; but very soon it comes out of this, and clings to her furry back.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

She carries it so until it is quite grown up, and no matter how much she may run or jump, it never seems to fall off. The leaves of the peppermint gum tree are the Opossum's favourite food, but nice little birds don't come amiss, and a 'Possum can go on ever eating.

"Someday you shall hear about the Tasmanian Wolf, and the fiercely destructive Tasmanian Devil, who deserves his name. But there's only time now to tell you about the famous Duckbill, or Platypus, also of Australia, who is said to have changed less than any animal living on earth to-day from what he was when he first came.

"For a long time after he was discovered no one quite knew what to call him, for he was like several creatures rolled into one. To begin with, while all other animals and birds we know of are 'warm-blooded,' the blood of the Duckbill is only a little less cold than that of 'cold-blooded' reptiles and fish. He has the beak of a bird, and a bird's webbed feet; each of his toes—he has five on each foot—is furnished with a very strong claw, and he has a horny spur on each heel connected by a little canal with a gland in his leg which gives out poisonous fluid. His body is like an Otter's, with thick dark fur, and his cheeks have big pouches, like some of the monkeys', in which to store his food. Instead of teeth, a grown-up Duckbill has only two horny plates; young Duckbills have teeth as well, but these soon wear away in grinding

SOME ANIMALS IN AUSTRALIA

the sand they are bound to take in with their food. Insects and worms, and very small water folk, are what Duckbills feed on in their native land, though I heard of two young ones kept in captivity who flourished on bread and milk.

“And now comes a most astonishing thing about these very curious creatures—they are hatched from eggs! They are white, and about three inches long; the mother Duckbill lays them in a warmly-lined chamber at the end of a burrow in the river-bank, which is sometimes fifty feet long, and when her babies are hatched they go into her small pouch, where she suckles them for a while. A young Duckbill’s beak is short, and quite soft round the edges—almost like a wide mouth. At first he is blind and naked, but his eyes soon open, and his hair quietly grows, and before long he is as frolicsome as a puppy. He is a splendid swimmer, as you would guess from his webbed feet, and seldom leaves the water except to enter his burrow.”

CHAPTER XXV

BIRDS OF MANY LANDS

MILADY thought she would like a stroll, and as Val opened the study window to let her out, a shrill, sharp cry came from overhead, where the sky gleamed red in the afterglow of the sunset.

“That is the call note of the Wild Swan,” said the Grey Man, as Val came back to his seat. “When our summer bird-visitors leave us in the autumn to winter in sunnier lands, Wild Swans and Wild Geese, and other birds from the wind-swept North, come to our shores for shelter. Great Britain is the warmest part of their range, and weather that seems very cold to us is balmy and mild to them.

“The beautiful Swans on our lakes and rivers are called ‘Mute Swans,’ and may always be known from the rest by their beaks, which are black at the bottom, and orange red at the tip, with a large fleshy knob at their base. When in a wild state they are not really ‘mute,’ for they trumpet like the Hooper, or Whistling Swan, the one very likely that we heard just now. Swans are found in a great many parts of the world, and travel long distances with ease. ‘How

BIRDS OF MANY LANDS

fast can they fly?' The American Swan, that travels in a wedge-shaped flock of some thirty or forty birds, is said to cover more than a hundred miles an hour! He does not start unless the wind is in his favour, and when he does, like many other birds, he flies so high as to be invisible to our eyes. Some naturalists say that tiny birds, whose wings are not fitted to carry them far, travel long distances over the sea on the backs of Swans and Geese when instinct bids them seek another land in which to nest, though this is only guess work. We are learning new things about birds every day, but as yet we know very little as to how such tiny creatures as Goldcrests reach our shores from such distant countries.

"When I was a boy I found a Swan's nest on a sheltered island in a shallow stream where I often played at being Robinson Crusoe. I had no boat, but I could easily wade through the water when the river was not too high, and every day after I came across that nest I went to see how it was getting on. 'What was it like?' Just a large untidy heap of sticks among the coarse grasses; but three pale green eggs lay in its slightly hollow centre, and I was as much excited as if they had been made of gold.

"The parent Swans were so used to me by this time, for they and I really shared the island, that they seemed to think it only natural I should be interested in their domestic arrangements, and did not appear to mind me. This was rather curious, for at breeding

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

times Swans are usually very pugnacious. When two of the eggs were hatched—the third was added—the mother Swan allowed me to go quite close to her downy little cygnets, whose sober coats of light brownish grey were beautifully soft to touch. I have often seen her taking them for a trip down the river, sailing along as proud as could be, with the two of them on her back.

“There’s a pretty story about the American Swan I was speaking of just now. One of these fine birds had been brought down by a random shot, and at his cry of distress his comrades stayed their flight, and quickly flocked round to help him. Swimming behind, for he had fallen into a lake, several of them held up his broken wing, while others pushed him forward in the water. It was cleverly as well as kindly done, and showed no small intelligence.

“Bewick’s Swan, and the Hooper, come from the Arctic regions, and those wintering here will return with the spring to Iceland and Scandinavia, there to build their nests and rear their young. There’s a splendid Black Swan found in Australia; and one in South America which has a black neck, while the rest of his plumage is snowy white. The Polish Swan is distinguished from a Mute Swan by having slate-coloured legs, and her cygnets are usually white from birth.”

“Were Turkeys ever wild?” was Val’s next question. He had had an encounter with “a very



Swan and Cygnets



Turkey

BIRDS OF MANY LANDS

gobbly one" on his way through the village just before Christmas, and thought him extremely fierce.

"Yes, indeed, boy; and many are wild to this present day. Our tame Turkeys are descended from the free ones of Mexico and North America. These fly long distances, and when they are tired, drop down into some river and swim. At night they roost in the trees, sometimes ascending mountains as high as 10,000 feet above the level of the sea. The male Swan has numbers of wives, and leaves all the trouble of rearing his families to these.

"A most interesting relative of our farmyard friend is the Brush Turkey, a small and insignificant gentleman about the size of a Partridge. He belongs to the family of birds which build mounds—the 'Mound Builders,' they are called—and when his mate feels inclined to lay eggs, he collects an enormous heap of rubbish by scraping up and scattering behind him with his very strong claws all the decaying vegetable matter that he can find.

"When the mound is large enough to please him, and the centre of it begins to grow hot (as such refuse always does), his mate digs several holes in the middle of it, dropping an egg into each. Then off she goes, her duty done, knowing that her babies will soon be hatched. When they leave the mound their wings are fit to fly with, and they at once take

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

refuge in a tree. Unless they are very quick about this, they are sure to be pounced upon by some hungry animal."

"Such pretty grey birds were feeding in the field outside the park, the other day," said Nancy, trying to peer through the growing darkness. "Grandmother said that they were Sea-gulls, but we're ever so far from the sea!"

"Gulls fly a long way inland when pressed by hunger," the Grey Man replied, "and in London whole flocks of them may be seen on the Thames Embankment, almost tame enough to feed out of one's hand. Among these are Herring-gulls, which are found in many parts of Northern Europe, on the islands of the Atlantic, and in North America, where they call them Harbour Gulls. A lady out there spent a great deal of time in studying them, and she was amazed to notice the different colours of their eggs. Some were a soft sky blue, she said, and some the colour of the rocks, marked with lilac and purple or black.

"She found out a lot about baby Sea-gulls. When first hatched, as she saw them, they are very helpless little creatures; but in a few hours' time they grow strong enough to walk. If their nest is in a tree, they stay there quite happily until their wings are big enough for them to fly; but if it happens to be on the ground, or on some narrow ledge of rock, even when they are only three or four hours old they



Sea-gull



Pelican

BIRDS OF MANY LANDS

will scramble out at the sound of a human voice and try to hide themselves by lying flat in the sand, or beneath a few blades of grass. It is instinct that tells them to do this, for they can't possibly know that their mottled down will make them almost invisible when they lie quite still."

"What's the name of the bird with the pouch in his beak?" inquired Val presently. "Someone told me he used that pouch as a net, and that lots of his kind swam in a line under the water to catch all the fish they could! I didn't believe it—at least, not quite—for it sounded too funny for anything."

"It was true, all the same, Val. You're talking of the Pelican, who has a large elastic pouch fixed on to the lower part of his beak. The upper half forms its lid, or cover, and when he wants to fish he opens it wide, and there's his net all ready for him. Choosing a sheet of water that isn't too deep for his feet to touch the bottom when swimming with his head just beneath the surface, he forms into line with other Pelicans who are hungry, about three feet's space being left between each. In this way they scour the lake, and by the time they are ready to waddle on shore, their pouches are all quite full.

"When a mother Pelican wants to feed her young ones, she presses her pouch against her breast, and opens the 'lid.' One after another the squarking fledglings pop in their heads and help themselves. They are quaint little things, covered with soft brown

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

down. Not for a long time do they share the rose-tinged feathers of their parents.

“Once Pelicans lived where we live now, but to-day they are only found in warm regions of the globe. Though awkward when on the ground, they are graceful and powerful flyers, travelling in long lines with their heads bent back. The Crested Pelican is one of the handsomest; his eyes are like pools of gleaming silver, and his pouch bright crimson, shaded with blue.

“Another great fisherman is the Heron. He’s found in most parts of Europe, through Asia to China and Japan, also in Africa and even Australia. In olden times to chase him with Falcons was a royal sport, and in many lands it was against the law to kill or molest him. He is very scarce in England now, for most of the marsh lands he loves have all been drained, and the ‘heronries,’ or Heron colonies, now left contain very few nests. These are flat and wide, made of sticks and twigs interlined with grass and fibre. In Great Britain the Heron chooses a tall elm or oak to build in, but sometimes the colony may be on a rocky and well-wooded cliff.

“He is a capital father, industriously helping to feed his young and teaching them how to use the long sharp beak which is their only weapon of defence. When hunted by Falcons, who were trained to swoop down upon him from a great height, he would sometimes receive one on the tip

Pelicans





Great Heron

BIRDS OF MANY LANDS

of it, which pierced the Falcon like a sword. When [he's catching fish, the Grey Heron stands knee deep in the stream, until, beneath the rippling water, he sees a flash of silver or a gleam of blue; then down he strikes, and impales his fish, which is swallowed in a moment. Early in the morning and late at night are the times he favours for fishing; if the moon is shining, he stays up late, and many gay young waterfowl are missing next day. Voles and Water-rats, Snakes, Frogs and Toads all come alike to him, and the number of Trout he can put away makes the owner of a stream very angry.

“The plumage of the ordinary Heron is black and white, but there's a Purple Heron, with yellow eyes and a yellow beak, who is common in several parts of Europe, and well-known also in Africa. The Great Heron is very grand indeed. The feathers of his crest are long and pointed, and his plumage varies from chestnut red to a bluish grey; of the black and white feathers in front of his neck, only the white side shows. He's at his finest at pairing times, when in common with other birds that wish to charm their mates, he wears all kinds of adornments. His cry is a hoarse and loud *Crank—Crank*, and is often heard in the spring-time.

“The White Heron has delicate snowy plumage which glistens with the sheen of silver, and during the breeding season, when his yellow beak turns the colour of ebony, he carries most exquisite feathers on

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

his back. He's a very shy and silent bird, roosting at night high up in the trees. He is found in Europe, Asia, and Africa, and sometimes, though very rarely, pays a visit to our shores."

"Tell us what Storks are like!" said Nancy. She had heard it was Storks that brought new babies, but though she knew this was a fairy tale, she thought they must be very nice birds.

"Some are rather like Herons, Nancy, and, of course, they all belong to the Heron tribe. They live in most countries of the world, and since they are said to bring good fortune, wherever they go they find a welcome. Year after year they return to the same place to breed, building their nests—great heaps of sticks—on chimneys or roofs of houses, in preference to trees or rocks. They are devoted to their young, and very friendly to man.

"The Saddle-backed Stork of tropical America is extremely handsome, but I couldn't say this for the Marabou, another of many kinds of Stork. His looks are not improved by the crimson pouch which hangs down over his chest, and altogether he is rather like a freak. On account of his measured and stately tread, he is often called the Adjutant; in some Indian cities he's protected by law, because of his use as a scavenger. He kills big Snakes, if they cross his path, as easily as he does a small mammal; and it would be difficult to think of anything he does not care to eat, from dead cats—so they say!—to frogs



White Heron





Storks



Marabou Storks

BIRDS OF MANY LANDS

and mice. Flocks of Marabous often fly so high that they are out of sight, and no one would know that they were near but for the 'chopping' noise they make with their beaks, which is heard quite a long way off. This is the only sound Storks make; I suppose it's their way of talking."

CHAPTER XXVI

BIRDS STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL

CRANES are quite as interesting in their way as Storks, and long ago we had swarms of them in England. You would think they were like Storks to look at, and so they are, up to a certain point. But most of their habits are very different, though they, too, love damp and marshy ground.

“No one can say that a Crane has no voice, for when alarmed—and he’s always extremely cautious!—he trumpets so loudly that he can be heard two miles away. It is the shape of his windpipe which allows him to do this; it is peculiarly long, and arranged in coils in a cavity in his breast-bone.

“The Crane never perches in a tree, but stands on one leg to go to sleep, with his head tucked away in his back feathers. He feeds whenever he thinks he’s hungry, at any time of the day or night, and eats an enormous quantity of grain. His nest of twigs and grass is built on the ground, and is usually two or three feet round. His mate lays two or three eggs at a time; they are green, spotted over with red.

“No bird is more fond of company than he, and



Marabou Stork



Paradise Crane

BIRDS STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL

when leaving one land for another, he always flies in a vast flock, very high up in the air. The long legs of each bird are stretched out behind him, and he carefully keeps his exact position in the line, which is led by an old bird who knows the way. Looked at from a distance, a flock of Cranes might be an aerial serpent, curving this way and that as the wary leader guides them in what he thinks is their safest course.

“One of the most imposing of the Crane family is the Crowned Crane of Africa, with his fan-shaped crest of brittle feathers springing from the centre of his head. His plumage is a sombre grey, while his crown shows rings of white and yellow, tipped with black. The bare parts of his face are red, or red and white ; and there are white, red, and yellow plumes in his tail. On the West Coast of Africa the natives tame him, and he runs in and out of their compounds at will.

“The White Crane of Asia has been called ‘the lily of birds,’ and haunts wide pools where the rushes and other water plants on which he lives grow in great abundance. The Sarus Crane of India has a longer beak, and blue-grey plumage. He’s a home-loving bird, and stays in one place all the year round so long as the sun leaves him plenty of water. Instead of moving about in companies, he goes in pairs, and sportsmen are asked to shoot both him and his ‘mate’ if they must shoot either, since if one be left it is only to pine away and die of loneliness.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

Many birds show deep fondness for their mates, as well as for their young.

“One of the most beautiful sights I ever saw was a flock of Flamingoes in full flight. It was when I first went out to North-west India, and really I thought it was some rapidly moving cloud of fiery red travelling over a distant hill. Their wings are a brilliant crimson or scarlet, and the rest of their plumage a soft rose pink.

“Their favourite hunting grounds are the neighbourhoods of large rivers and lakes, where they mass together in thousands. A full-grown Flamingo is over six feet high, and has such long legs that you might well wonder how the mother-bird manages to sit on her nest. But she does this quite comfortably, folding them under her so that her knees stick out. Her long neck is laid back, and it is said that she turns it so that she looks behind her.

“The nest is a plate-shaped heap of mud, slightly hollowed out in the centre, and raised a few inches off the ground. Hundreds of such nests are often placed together, for Flamingoes breed in colonies, and a Flamingo ‘village’ on the borders of a lake may contain an immense number of sitting birds. The eggs are pale green, and almost entirely covered by an outer layer of chalk.

“The mother Flamingo sits for a month, closely guarded by her mate. When her young ones are hatched—she has generally two—they stay in the



Crowned Crane



Flamingoes

BIRDS STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL

nest for a few hours, and then take to the water and swim. Their beaks are almost straight at first, but those of full grown Flamingoes curve down at the tip, so that by turning their heads upside down, as they find no difficulty in doing, they can scoop up small creatures from the river bed with the greatest ease. Their jaws are furnished with tooth-like saws, and when they close these, they can shake out the water from their beaks without losing the tiniest of their captives. Their tongues, by the way, are most peculiar, being composed of cells and layers of fat. The Ancients gave a dish of them a place of honour at their feasts."

"How funny 'a Flamingo village' sounds," Val remarked, "I should so like to see one."

"You would probably find it deserted when you reached it, unless it were nesting-time, when I don't suppose all the mothers would leave their eggs. Long before you were near, the sentinels posted on the outskirts would give warning of your approach by loud cries of *Honk ! Honk !* It is the same cry as that of the Goose, and these very grand birds are certainly his relations. The Persian name for a Flamingo is Kar-i-surkh, which sounds splendid, but means just 'Red Goose.'"

"There's a beautiful bird in our row," said Val. "He's a Cockatoo, and has lovely pale rose-pink feathers. He doesn't talk much, but he says 'Hallo! and once I heard him call out 'Right you are !'"

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

“The best talkers of the Parrot Tribe are the Grey Parrots, though Cockatoos can be taught a great deal. Did you notice how sharply his beak is hooked? If you felt underneath this—not a wise thing to do!—you would find it ridged like a file, instead of being channelled or smooth, like a Parrot’s. Another difference between these birds is that a Parrot’s tongue is thick and fleshy, and often fringed or brush-like at the end, so that he may get at the nectar in the flowers, while a Cockatoo’s tongue is always quite simple; and another you would notice at once is that a Parrot never has a crest of feathers.

“Cockatoos are found all over Australia, and in some of the Malay and Phillipine Islands. Many are perfectly gorgeous birds, such as Leadbeater’s Cockatoo, with his magnificent crest of red and pink and orange. The Black Cockatoo, found in North Australia and the Papuan Islands, is the largest of all the Parrot Tribe, and famous on account of his peculiar tongue. This is like a tiny round worm with a black head, and takes up scarcely any room in his big mouth. A full-grown Black Cockatoo measures nearly two feet without his tail, and is so strong and powerful that he has driven away most of the other Cockatoos that once shared his favourite haunts.

“He eats seed and fruit, but his principal food is a nut that he finds on a very high tree. No other bird but he can get at the kernel within its stony



Flamingo



Cockatoo

BIRDS STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL

shell. It would take too long to tell you just how he does it, but some day you'll read about this for yourself, and then you'll marvel at his perseverance.

"There are more than five hundred kinds of Parrots; most of them live in the warmer regions of the world, where they feed on fruit and nuts, and make their nests in hollow trees. When the pearly white eggs are hatched, the parents take it in turns to feed the hungry baby Parrots, disgorging food they have already partly digested into the little things' open beaks. They are sociable birds, and feed in flocks, and I needn't tell you what a noise they make.

"One of the most wonderful things about a Parrot is his memory, and though he may live to a great age—some say a hundred years! he never seems to forget what he has once learned. He grows tame very quickly, and shows quite a human love of teasing. One Parrot I knew enjoyed few things more than to call the cat in his mistress's voice, and when Mrs Pussy came purring gladly into the room, he made the house ring with his laughter.

"Parrots are very affectionate creatures, and dearly love those who are kind to them. A little green Parrot belonging to the uncle of a dear old friend of mine when his master died, kept calling for him by name incessantly. The bird had been accustomed to sit on his shoulder by the hour together, perfectly happy so long as he might be

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

near him. Poor little bird! It was sad to see his grief, and no one knew how to comfort him."

"Let's hear about Peacocks, now," said Val. "Grandmother has a fan of Peacock-feathers, and I tried last night to count the colours. I couldn't—there were so many; green like the emeralds in Grandmother's ring, and golden, and blue, and violet!"

"No other bird has more exquisite plumage than the Peacock. In one of *Æsop's* fables it is said that he complained to the goddess Juno that his call note was harsh and unmusical, and begged her to give him a voice like the Nightingale's. But Juno refused; Nature had bestowed upon all her children one special gift, she said, and his was beauty, so he must be content. Then he spread out his magnificent fan, and strutted here and there in the sunshine that his soberly-clad pea-hens might see and admire him. When the courting season is over, these beautiful plumes, the greatly lengthened feathers of his upper tail coverts, drop out on the ground; and the tints of his head and throat are no longer so dazzlingly brilliant.

"Peacocks are wild in India, Assam, and Ceylon, haunting thick jungles in the neighbourhood of water, and gathering together in hundreds. Their curiously harsh cry is heard miles away. In Java these birds are eaten by the natives, but in India the Hindus look upon them as sacred, and are much distressed if any are shot.



Grey Parrot



Peacock

BIRDS STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL

“Peacocks roost very high in the trees, so as to be out of reach of the Tigers and Wild Cats who would soon put an end to them. Their nests, rough heaps of sticks and feathers, are built on the ground, however, and the care of their young is left entirely to the dowdy Pea-hens.

“The Ostrich, another bird that is famous for his feathers, makes a much better father. He is chiefly found in Africa to-day, though still known in Syria, Arabia and Mesopotamia, and is the largest known bird in existence. Not only does he sit on the eggs at night, but he also takes great interest in the young ones when they are hatched. The nest is a shallow hole in the sand; and here his hens lay as many as sixteen large white eggs each, twenty-four of the ordinary hens' eggs put together being only the size of one. At daybreak the father bird goes off duty, and the hens take their turn at sitting; but when noon comes they leave the sun to do their work for them, first lightly covering the eggs with sand so that his burning rays may not scorch them.

“When the young Ostrich leaves his shell, the first thing he does is to swallow stones, and he takes nothing more for the next few days. It is by means of these stones that the grain he eats is crushed in his gizzard, so that he can digest it. Yes—it does seem ‘funny,’ Val; but Nature knows what she is about, and the stones don't do him any harm unless he swallows too many.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

“Besides grain, the Ostrich eats Snakes and Lizards, and perhaps small mammals and other birds ; but I fancy that what he enjoys most must be the juicy water melons he finds on the borders of the desert. His voice is a loud and important roar, something like the roar of a Lion ! But until he’s grown up he is ‘seen and not heard,’ which is only right, you know.”

Val grinned, for that morning Grandmother Blake had said that some boys “talked too much.” And try as he might, he couldn’t help asking questions. Half-a-dozen at least were on his lips now, but tea came in before he could ask them. The Grey Man soon finished his one piece of toast, and had more to say about Ostriches.

“These birds,” he said, “cannot fly at all, but use their small wings to balance themselves while running. They run so fast that even the swift-footed African Antelope cannot keep pace with them, and a hunter on horseback would never overtake them if only they could run straight ! But they can’t, so he takes a short cut suddenly, and meets them as they veer round. With so much running the leg of an Ostrich has grown immensely strong—he can strike down a Leopard, it’s said, with a single blow, and his claws are uncommonly sharp.

“It is very difficult to surprise a herd of Ostriches, for they have most marvellous sight, and, as I believe I told you, they often feed with Gnus and Quaggas,



Ostrich



Emu

BIRDS STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL

who can hear much better than they; so they are doubly safe. The natives have several ways of trying to get near them unperceived, since their feathers always fetch a good price. One is to dress themselves up in Ostrich skins, and when so disguised to approach the birds when they are feeding; another is to hide in a pit beside a nest, and shoot poisoned spears at the Ostriches as they return to their eggs. These are much prized by the natives, who cook them by standing an egg in the centre of a fire, and twisting it round with a forked stick, which has been stuck through the top. The shells they use as water vessels, stuffing up the holes they have made with grass.

“When they intend to pillage the camp of a rival tribe some distance off, they bury a number of such novel water-bottles on a certain track beneath the sand. ‘What for?’ Well, you can’t travel across a desert for several days if you have no water, and the would-be robbers want to be quite sure that on their homeward journey they will have enough to drink. So when they make off with their enemy’s goods, they are careful to return in the track of those buried Ostrich shells, and often get safely away with their booty.

“The Emu is the next largest bird to the Ostrich, and he, too, runs instead of flying. Australia and the islands near are this bird’s home, and he is very like his cousin, the Cassowary. His mate is both larger

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

and fiercer than he, and leaves him to look after the eggs! Her voice is a deep and hollow boom, rather like the sound of a muffled drum, while he, poor fellow, can only hiss or grunt when he finds her especially trying. The Cassowary shuns the plains and the open forest country, but it is here that Emus are usually found. They are very swift birds, and can race Kangaroos, but when caught are easily tamed. An Emu knows as well as possible when anyone is afraid of him, and out of sheer mischief a tame one will chase a stranger if he should seem inclined to shrink away.

"Another first cousin of the Ostrich is the Rhea, sometimes called 'the Ostrich of South America.' He has three toes instead of two, and larger wings, but his plumage is not so fine. While the Ostrich is often reared for his feathers—some day I'll tell you about the Ostrich farms—so that ladies may have them to deck their hats, the Rhea's are only used for brushes."

"Lucky for him!" said Val. And the Grey Man nodded.

"There's another flightless bird," he said, "that is most particularly interesting—the far-famed Penguin of the Antarctic colonies. If you saw him walking upright on land, you'd think him like a funny little old man. The water is his real home, and he swims and dives like a fish. Before explorers visited those shores he was so safe that he didn't need his wings, since he had no enemies to fly from.



Penguin

BIRDS STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL

“So he didn’t fly ; and in the course of time his wings, from total disuse, turned into flippers, or paddles. He works them one after the other in swimming, as a boatman works his oars, while his legs are stretched out straight behind him.

“At breeding-time the Penguin leaves the sea for land, where he nests in large colonies, or ‘rookeries.’ While the hens are sitting, their mates have a funny way of standing in lines along the shore, when they look, from a distance, like rows of small soldiers. Some of their nests, such as those of Rock Hopper Penguins, are only slight hollows in the dark soil, with perhaps a few bits of dried grass for a lining. But the Jackass Penguin, so called from a habit he has of throwing back his head and braying, hollows out for himself a burrow which is sometimes twenty feet deep. His mate lays her eggs at the end of this. The pretty little Blue Penguin of New Zealand nests in a burrow too, or in some safe crevice of the rocks. Like many other Penguins, the big Kings, and the Emperors, which breed in the darkness of the Antarctic night, make no nest at all. In order to keep her egg, or her newly hatched chick, from touching the chilly ice, the mate of the Emperor Penguin holds it on her feet against her feathers, and if for one moment she lets it go, the egg won’t hatch or the chick will die. Baby Penguins are very helpless little things, and are fed by their mothers for months ; the young Kings

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

have long brown down, but that of the young Emperor is silver-white. So many of the Emperor Penguin's chicks are frozen to death, poor little creatures, that there's often only one left to several mothers, who all want to nurse it at the same time.

"It takes the Penguins a long while to learn that anyone wants to hurt them, and they waddle up to strangers and stare inquisitively, as if to say, 'what *are* you doing here?' Their skin, on which the feathers grow so close together that it almost seems like fur, is used by native tribes for lining their outer garments, while Penguins are also valuable for the oil that is yielded by their fat. . . . Good night, little people—here's that car again! I did not think it was so late."

CHAPTER XXVII

WINGED HUNTERS

THIS time to-morrow," said Val importantly, "we shall be going home!"

Nearly a week had passed since their last visit, for the Grey Man had not been well enough to see them until to-day. He looked much the same as usual now, except that his face was a little thinner, and it was only Nancy who noticed how tired his voice was.

"I wish—I wish you were coming, too," she whispered; and the Grey Man tightened his clasp of her small brown hand.

"Grandmother said we must ask you to tell us about the Eagle," Val remarked, when he had satisfied Billy that there wasn't the faintest chance of finding a rat hidden under the bookcase. "She said he was the most splendid bird of all, and King of the Air before flying machines came."

"I think he's that still, and you'd say so, too, if you saw him sweep through the upper air, his great black wings scarcely seeming to move, and his amber eyes fixed piercingly on the sun. His tense-webbed feathers make a soft hum as he poises himself at a different

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

angle, and when he looks earthward from that great height, at which not even the keenest-sighted sailor can discern him, he sees every movement down below, to the rustle of a blade of grass. Not a sound can reach him up there in the solitude of the great blue dome, but he knows what the wood-things are doing as well as if he were amidst them, once they leave the shelter of trees or bushes.

“The Hawk Tribe, to which he belongs, includes quite three hundred birds of prey, and he is the most famous huntsman of them all. In Scotland and some wild parts of Ireland, Eagles are found still, and on the barren hills to the north of the Tweed the Golden Eagle is lord of the heights. Deer forests are his favourite haunts, and many a young Deer falls a victim to his hunger. For hours he will hover about a herd till he sees one stray from his mother’s side; then down he hurls himself through the air, falling upon him with beak and talons so fiercely that he is soon dead. If the hind is near, the Golden Eagle does not find his task so easy, for there is nothing she would not face when her little one is in danger. And though she has no horns, she has very sharp hoofs, so by hitting out at him with her front feet, she not uncommonly beats him off.

“This Eagle will attack even a full-grown Deer if he can swoop upon him while he treads some narrow path close to the edge of a precipice. Feeling those cruel claws fixed in his back, the Deer is stricken with



Eagle



Crested Eagle

WINGED HUNTERS

fear, and in his wild struggles to throw off his enemy, loses his balance and is hurled below. And the Golden Eagle has no more trouble, for his meal is ready for him.

“Though not quite so large as a Sea Eagle, he is the most magnificent bird of his tribe. When seen in full daylight, the golden tips to his rich brown feathers make him look ‘a prince of the sun,’ and there’s something particularly grand in his bearing. He nests high up on the mountain side, in rocky places so difficult for men to reach that if they mean to take his eggs they must be content to risk their lives. Their only way of getting at them is by letting themselves down from some crag above by means of a stout rope, and woe to the man the parent birds find near their eyrie when they return !

“A Golden Eagle pairs for life. His mate is rather bigger than he, as is the case with most birds of prey ; her wings, when outspread, often measure ten feet across. Sometimes these Eagles hunt in pairs, one lying in ambush close at hand while the other dashes in amongst the long grass and bracken where timid Hares are hiding in their forms. Scared out of their wits by the hoarse cries so near them—Golden Eagles can ‘bark’ as well as shriek—the foolish creatures rush into the open, where the waiting Eagle pounces upon the first that comes.

“Young Eaglets have enormous appetites, and that they may have plenty to eat, the parent birds

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

make a larder of a flat ledge of rock near the nest. Here they spread every variety of food—Hares and Rabbits, and birds of all sorts. Stories have often been told of children being carried off to an Eagle's eyrie, but I doubt whether any of them are true.

“Sea-eagles are very splendid birds. You might think from the name that they could swim, but this was given to them because they usually live near the sea, and eat fish as well as animals. Their legs are not so heavily feathered as those of other Eagles, so they can plunge in up to their breasts after some silver-gleaming victim without getting their plumage sodden. Sometimes a great Sea-eagle will swoop down upon a Salmon in a still lake as he comes for a moment near the surface, and then there will be a battle royal. For the Salmon is a very strong fish, and won't let his life go without a fight. The Eagle holds on to him like grim death, as he tries to dive; and perhaps, while he is still unconquered, a man who has watched the struggle from the shore may steal up and capture both. The White-headed Sea-eagle is the national emblem of the United States, and no country could have a finer one.

“There are some eight kinds of Sea-eagles, which are found in most parts of the world. The White-tailed Sea-eagle still haunts the rugged coast of the Hebrides, building his nest on a rocky crag, or on some strong branch at the top of a lofty pine. They go back to this nest year after year, and though it is



White-headed Sea-eagle



South American Eagle

WINGED HUNTERS

rather flat at first, in time it may be five or six feet high. When the mother-bird is sitting, her mate brings her fish and other dainties, which he does not attempt to share with her. When her white eggs are hatched, he is as ready to defend the two small downy eaglets as she herself.

The South American Eagle is a very handsome bird, and so is the black Birds'-nesting Eagle of India and Malaya. He spends the greater part of his time hovering over forests to spy out birds' nests, which he pounces upon and carries off, swallowing the eggs or fledglings as he sweeps through the limpid air. Then there are Crested Eagles, the largest of these being a very war-like fellow belonging to South Africa. Some of them build in the forks of large trees, often choosing one that overhangs a stream. The Monkey-eating Eagle lives in the Philippine Islands, and has a beak not unlike that of the great Black Cockatoo. Though Macaques are his particular food, he likes chickens too, and makes a raid on poultry yards if these come within his range.

"In captivity Eagles are always unhappy, for freedom is the breath of life to them; sometimes when caught in a trap they die, though only held by the foot. One was found so trapped in a forest in Scotland; he had spied out the bait that was set for a Fox, and in this way had met his fate. His friends had evidently brought him food, for a Hare and

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

some Grouse were found beside him. But to be a prisoner broke his heart, and since he could not be free, he died. An Eagle at large may live two hundred years—he is the longest-lived of all birds.”

“Isn’t the Falcon a kind of Eagle?” inquired Val presently, feeling rather ashamed of the lump in his throat which had not let him speak before.

“He belongs to the same tribe, boy, but is still more nearly related to the Vulture, the Lammergeier, or Bearded Vulture, being a very close connection. ‘Falcons’ include the Gerfalcon, the Kestrel, and the Peregrine; this last was the Falcon most often chosen for the royal sport of Falconry. The male bird was called the Tiercel, or Tassel, and was chiefly flown at such birds as Partridges, while the female tackled Herons and Rooks. Sometimes the Tiercel came to help her, both soaring spirally above their prey, so that first one and then the other might swoop down upon it. The Heron knew what they were up to, and did his best to keep above them. To make himself as light as possible, he would throw up the food he had lately swallowed; but he seldom escaped, for the Peregrine Falcon has untiring energy, and is amazingly swift. When Peregrines were taken out to hunt, their heads were hooded until the quarry was sighted, and they often sat on the huntsmen’s wrists.

“The Goshawk, another Falcon, is extremely



Falcon



Vulture

WINGED HUNTERS

swift on the wing, too, as are all the Hawk Tribe. When once he has overtaken his prey, he digs his talons into its back and drops with it to the ground. The lazy Buzzard, whose feathers are so downy that he makes no sound when he flies, doesn't care to exert himself, but waits till small birds fly close to his hiding-place, and then pounces out upon them. The Merlin is quite a tiny Falcon; he chases the Lark, who flies high to avoid him. He's said to be one of the fiercest of his tribe, but is very easy to tame.

"A bird which neither of you would like, is the terrible Vulture. There are many different kinds, but, except in the warmer regions of the old world, in the case of the Bearded Vulture, their necks are always bare. The King Vulture's is tinted with orange and red and purple, but in some varieties it is a dingy flesh colour, and looks as if it wanted soap and flannel!

"Vultures are useful to man as scavengers in some hot climates where refuse is thrown out into the narrow streets, for without their services the air would soon be poisoned. Their favourite food is carrion; they gather in multitudes over a battlefield, and hover above a caravan in the desert, always waiting, and on the watch. In India they haunt slaughter-houses, and when a vulture has pounced on a bone, he flies with it up to a great height, and then drops it down to break it. They say he does

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

the same with a Tortoise too, his claws not being strong enough for him to tear off the shell.

“The largest Vulture is the Condor. For days at a time he may go without food if no dead or dying animals come in his way, but when he gets the chance to eat, he eats so much that he becomes quite dazed. Then, though his wings are so strong and powerful, it's quite easy for men to lasso him with a rope. . . .”

“Let's talk of something else!” cried Val. “I'd rather like to hear about a Crocodile, though I s'pose he isn't really an animal.”



Condor



Crocodile

CHAPTER XXVIII

SOME INTERESTING CREATURES

A CROCODILE *is* an 'animal' in one way, Val, although, of course, he's a Reptile; for 'animal' really means 'a living being.' In that sense even a fish would be an 'animal'—eh?"

"I s'pose so," Val replied. "He's a queer-looking creature, anyhow, and his mouth's so fierce! It was quite wide open in a picture I saw of him, as if he wanted to swallow everything."

"He lies with it so for hours at a time, basking on a sandbank in the sun. If you could get close enough without alarming him, you would see little birds darting in and out of his jaws, snatching at the scraps of meat left between his teeth! These Zic-zacs, as they are called, follow him wherever he goes so long as there is enough of him above the water for them to perch on, for there are tiny insects on his skin which also serve them for food. The Crocodile finds them most useful sentries, for their sense of hearing is keener than his, and their cries of alarm often give him timely warning of the hunters' approach.

"It is lucky for us that he and the rest of the

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

Crocodile family are only found now in the warmer regions of the earth, though we know that once he haunted the banks of our rivers, too. When floating on the water, he looks like a log of wood; but the moment an animal comes to drink, or a native woman bends over the stream to fill her water-bottle, that 'log of wood' comes suddenly to life, and pounces upon its victim. Unwary bathers have often been captured and dragged under before they had any idea there was danger near.

"Long, long ago, before India was under British rule, a very terrible thing used to happen on the banks of the Ganges, the 'sacred river' of the Hindus. In very dry seasons when all the country was parched for rain, and the blazing sun had stolen every drop of moisture from the smaller rivers and streams, the Hindus imagined that the gods they worshipped were angry, and could only be appeased by some great sacrifice. So the Hindu mothers, trembling and weeping, took their nut-brown babies to the banks of the sacred river, and flung their little ones to the goddess they fancied lived in its swirling depths. Between their sobs, if they were not too terrified and grieved to cry, they prayed that rain might quickly fall, to make the rice fields green again."

"And the Crocodiles got the babies?" asked Val, in a horrified whisper.

The Grey Man nodded. "Yes," he said. . . . "But it never happens now, Nancy—those terrible

SOME INTERESTING CREATURES

days have passed. . . . If you saw a Crocodile close at hand," he went on presently, "you would notice that he has horny plates, or shields, covering his back, and part of his neck, and that his nostrils open at the very tip of his muzzle. When he wants to remain below the surface of the stream, he can breathe quite comfortably so long as this extreme tip is above the water, and his ears have movable lids to them which he can shut tightly down when he pleases. But it's his huge teeth you would think most wonderful; these are extremely sharp, and set in a single row on the top of each jaw. As soon as they begin to get blunt—and he gives them plenty of work to do!—new teeth grow up underneath them, pushing the old ones out. All his teeth, new and old, have hollow bases, and now and then as many as three or four are found packed into each other, like a nest of Indian boxes.

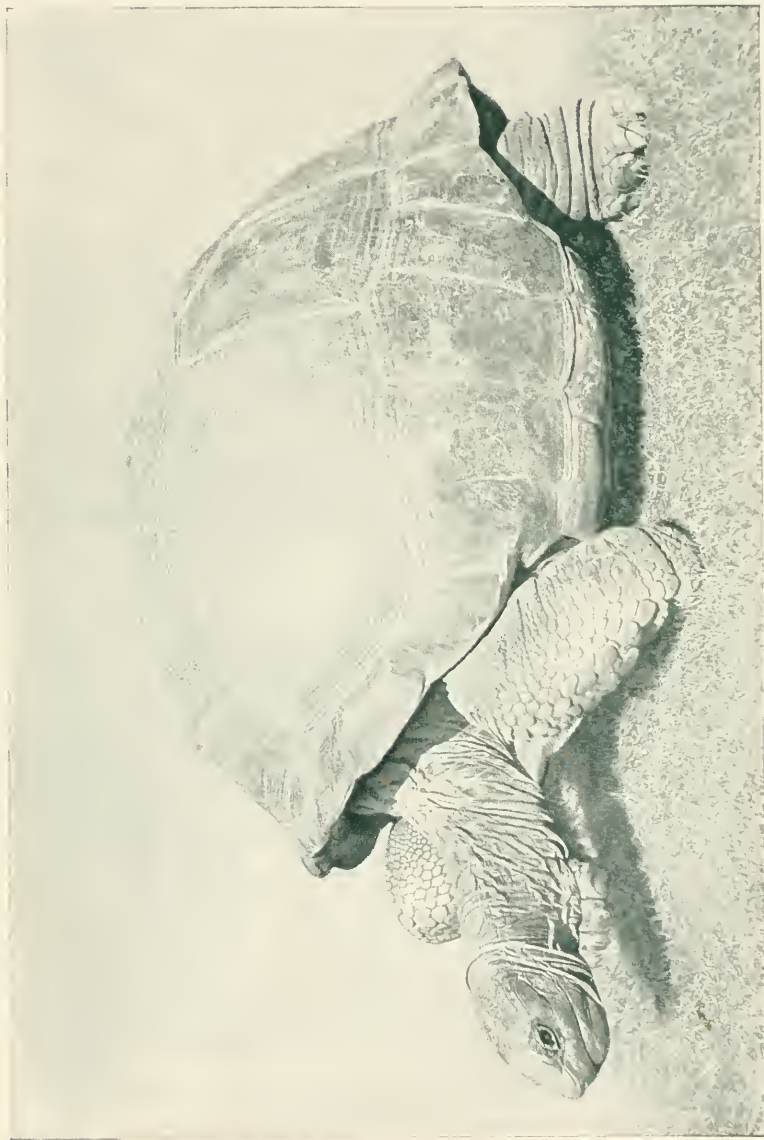
"Sometimes, in very dry seasons, a Crocodile buries himself in the mud, which cakes all round him; and then he sleeps in a heavy torpor until the mud grows moist again. At other times he may leave the river to go long distances on land in search of prey. Ferocious as he is, it is easy to escape him then, for since he cannot move his head sideways, if the animal he is hunting jumps out of his way, he has to turn his whole lumbering body before he can rush at him again. A Crocodile may be eighteen feet long, so you'll guess what a formidable foe he is.

"A baby Crocodile is so small a thing that I have

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

held one on my hand. All members of the Crocodile Family lay eggs, about the size of a Goose's, with a very hard white shell. The mother Crocodile buries these in the hot sand, and if her babies don't seem able to break the shells when they are ready to come out, it is said that she hears them crying, and goes to their help. She always escorts them to the river, and superintends their first bath.

"The second great order, or class, of Reptiles is that of the Tortoises and Turtles, and the bony shells of these curious creatures make them different from all other living things. It is almost as if they were 'reptiles turned inside out,' as someone has called them, for their bones are so queerly placed. Their jaws have sharp cutting edges instead of teeth, and are encased in horny sheaths, like those of birds. Land-Tortoises are found in a great many parts of the world. They have stout limbs shaped rather like clubs, covered with horny scales, and very strong nails at the tips of their toes. The shells of some Giant Tortoises are four feet long, if measured by the curve, as you'll see when you go to the Natural History Museum ; but Tortoises, as a rule, are small. The Galapagos Islands are the home of the Giants, where they make well-beaten roads to their drinking places up on the hills. Darwin tells us that during the breeding season, the males can roar ! The Tortoises found in South Europe, Egypt, and Algeria occasionally eat insects as well as vegetable food ; they love to bask in sun-



Giant Tortoise



Sea Turtles, or Turtles

SOME INTERESTING CREATURES

warmed sand, and in Europe bury themselves in the ground when winter comes. Some of them live to a great age, close on three hundred years.

"All Tortoises love water ; those that live in salt water are known as Turtles, and their limbs through much swimming have become flippers. They prefer the open sea, and are found in almost every part of the world. Except when the mother Turtles want to lay their eggs in a sandbank, they very rarely come on land, where they can scarcely shuffle along. It is the Green Turtle, unfortunately for himself, that makes such excellent soup ; while from the Hawksbill, who, as his name will tell you, has a strongly hooked beak like a bird's, we get the tortoiseshell used for ornaments. The Green Turtle is a vegetable feeder, but the Hawksbill, and his cousin the Loggerhead Turtle, live on fish."

Val was still thinking about Crocodiles—he couldn't get them out of his head.

"Crocodiles must be worse than Snakes!" he said, trying to imagine how he would feel if they lived in the river beyond the hill.

"I'm not sure about that, boy," was the reply. "A Boa Constrictor's pretty bad if you come across one! He and the Python are the largest Snakes living on the earth to-day, and they kill their prey by winding their huge folds round and round it, until it is suffocated. A Boa Constrictor is sometimes twelve feet long, and can put even big Deer and

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

Peccaries to death ; but his ordinary victims are small mammals, several of which go to make a full meal for him. Curled round a tree, his beautifully marked scales blending with the colour of bark and lichen, he waits motionless for hours, until he marks his victim. Then he glides toward it, so silently that scarcely a leaf stirs ; and after that it has no more chance. . . . Tree-Boas belong to tropical America, but other members of the same family are common in Madagascar.

“Pythons belong to the Boa Tribe also, and are sometimes twenty feet long. They are found in Africa, in the East, in parts of Australia and New Guinea. Night is the time they usually hunt for food ; they sleep through the day, often on the roofs of houses, choosing those that are thatched with straw. A Python’s eggs are arranged in a heap shaped like a pyramid, and the female will stay for two months at a time with her folds coiled round it in order to hatch them out. Snakes can go for months without food after having gorged an enormous meal—say a full-sized Sheep, or a young Calf ; and I expect a female Python does this before she devotes her attention to hatching.

“And now I am going to tell you about some very harmless Reptiles, the Lizards, which are common in all warm regions. Those I know most about are the Geckos, so called from their funny little clicking cry. A pair of them took up their abode in my bungalow



Boa Constrictor



Gecko

SOME INTERESTING CREATURES

when I was in India, and I often watched them scampering over the walls in chase of flies. They are known as the Tree Geckos since they frequently live in trees, and they have extraordinary little sucker-like pads to their feet which make it quite easy for them to cling on upside down when need be.

"I once knew a boy who kept a Gecko as a pet; he brought him with him to school one day, to show us in the recess. The little Lizard was put inside his desk, and that morning our form master, Mr Hill, took it into his head to see if our desks were tidy. When he came to young Brown's, he was surprised to see what he took for a pointed stick of wood poking out from under a book.

"‘What's this?’ he cried, catching hold of poor ‘Geckie’s’ tail. And ‘Geckie’ jerked himself away, leaving the end of his tail behind him! Brown was dreadfully upset, and so was Mr Hill, but ‘Geckie’ really didn't seem to mind, and soon grew another tail-tip. This is one of the Lizard's little ways; he parts with a piece of tail at the least provocation—which is rather startling until you know what to expect.

"‘Are there many kinds of Lizards?’ Why, yes, some seventeen hundred or so, and these are divided by naturalists into twenty distinct families. Some few of these are vegetarians, but most of them prey on insects and worms, and other small creatures which haven't backbones. The Monitor, the largest Lizard

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

of all, who is often seven feet long!—preys on the eggs of the Crocodile, and hisses loudly to warn his comrades when he sees the outraged father coming. For a Crocodile likes the taste of Monitors as much as they like the taste of his eggs, and makes a point of eating one whenever he gets the chance.

“There’s a Flying Lizard that takes tremendous leaps by means of an arrangement of skin attached to his limbs and ribs, and a funny Frilled Lizard in Australia that walks on his hind legs, just like a little old man. Then there’s the ugly Iguana, who is positively alarming when you see him first. Most of his family live in the trees, though some of them go a-fishing. The strangest Lizard of all, perhaps, is the extraordinary Sphenodon, who has not altered a bit in countless thousands of years, and is still exactly like the fossil Sphenodons dug up from deep down in the earth.

“Once upon a time, it’s thought, all animals had three eyes. Well, the Sphenodon has three eyes still, though the third, the one at the top of his head, has no power of sight in it now. Another wonderful member of the Lizard family is the Chameleon, which can change his colour according to his surroundings, and catches insects by darting out his very long tongue at them. This tongue folds up like a telescope when he wants to shut his mouth, and is covered with a sticky substance.”



Tree Frogs

SOME INTERESTING CREATURES

"I'd like to hear about Frogs," said Nancy. "Last spring one lived in my little garden, and he grew as tame as anything. Val said he was a Toad, but I'm sure he wasn't. His skin was so nice and smooth."

"And he felt quite damp when you touched him, eh? You're quite right—he was surely a Frog. The skin of a Toad is rough and more dry, and you would notice if you looked at him carefully that his hind legs were much shorter than your Froggie's. If you put your finger in Froggie's mouth, you'd feel his sharp little teeth; a Toad has none. They are different in many of their habits, too; the Toad rarely hunts except by night, while a Frog comes out in the daylight.

"Flying Frogs, found in the East and on the island of Madagascar, are quaint little chaps, with very large discs on the tips of their webbed feet, and extremely big hind feet. Their eyes are particularly full and brilliant; and gleam like stars among the trees. Often they would not be noticed but for this, for their skin is the same bright green as the leaves of the boughs on which they live. They only take to the water during the breeding season. The young of a Flying Frog in Venezuela have wee sucking-discs at the end of their mouths, and they cling with these to their mother's back as she swims about. Sometimes one Flying Frog may have as many as eighteen babies to mind.

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"Among many other curious Frogs is the European Tree Frog. He's bright green, too, and has special glands on the under surface of his body by which he can draw in the dew on the leaves, so that he need not go down to the water until breeding-time comes round. A mother Tree Frog in Brazil makes a little nest of mud, shaped like a basin, in some snug corner of a pond, in which to lay her eggs. Her mate, lazy fellow, doesn't help her at all, but leaves her to do all the work."

"Is a Toad really poisonous?" asked Val, who had heard strange stories about them at school.

"Not to human beings, Val, though he certainly tries to poison a hedgehog or any other animal that goes to eat him! Under his skin, and in two bumps just behind his head, he has an acid juice, which he squirts out to burn his enemy's mouth when he finds himself in danger of being swallowed. He can't jump so far as a Frog, since his legs are shorter, so Nature gives him this means of defending himself.

"Mrs Toad is a very busy little creature. Instead of laying her eggs in a mass, as Mrs Frog does, she places them on a long string. With most Toads these eggs hatch into baby tadpoles, but not so those of the Surinam Toad. Her eggs, which she carries on her back, under a skin she grows to protect them, are hatched straight away into tiny Toads, which can hop as gaily as she does herself.



Toad



Giant Salamander

SOME INTERESTING CREATURES

“Toads and Frogs are both Amphibians — that is, they are so formed that they are able to make their home either in the water or on land. Another Amphibian is the Newt, which is just a little bit like the Crocodile, and is to be found in England still. The big Water Newt is rarely seen on land, but some of the smaller ones live in wet places, such as marshes and swamps. They need plenty of water in order to exist, for so that they may be cool and damp they must constantly squeeze this through tiny pores, from the store they carry underneath the skin. The black and yellow Salamander, the Newt’s first cousin, does this also, and he is so cold to the touch that people used to think he could pass through fire without being burnt.

“Newts look like little fishes when first they’re born, but young Salamanders are Tadpoles. Sometimes they are hatched from eggs, but more often they are born alive. Their colour is blackish grey, tinged with green, and marked with small golden spots on the back. They are chiefly found in Europe, Algeria, and Syria.

“The Giant Salamander is famous for having had his skeleton mistaken for that of an ancient man when it was found buried far under the earth. The stout-limbed Giant Salamander of to-day lives in the rivers of Japan and China, and is sometimes forty-four inches long. He is fond of curling himself round a rock in the bed of a narrow mountain stream, but

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

his little ones usually hide in holes, where they feel more safe.

“The mother Giant Salamander often lays as many as five hundred minute eggs. These are arranged on long strings, like necklaces of pearls, and her mate takes charge of them until they are hatched, driving away all small fish that come near as if furious with rage. The baby Tadpoles are about an inch long, and soon become young Salamanders. ‘What do they eat?’ Worms, Fishes and Frogs. Here comes tea, and I hope you’re both hungry.”

CHAPTER XXIX

A FEW OF THE WATER-FOLK

I DON'T like last times," said Val, as he sadly eyed a large walnut cake with almond paste on the top. It had crystallised cherries, like rosy buttons, stuck in between, and wasn't at all the kind of cake to be left without a sigh.

"But this isn't a 'last time!'" cried Nancy quickly—and she wasn't thinking of cakes at all. "We're coming back these very next holidays—didn't you say so, dear Grey Man?"

"To be sure I did," he answered, smiling at her. "I shall look out for you when Easter comes. And if all's well, I'll tell you then a great deal more about animals—wood-folk, and river-folk, and sea-folk, too. We haven't even mentioned Whales and Dolphins yet, or numbers of other creatures you would say were 'wonderful' if only you knew about them. Then there are insects, and ants, and bees; the life-stories of these are as strange as any fairy-tale!"

Val halved a big slice of the walnut cake, generously leaving the top piece for Nancy. "When we were coming to you to-day," he said, "we stopped to look at the fish in Grandmother's lake, just by the

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

West Lodge, you know. The water was so clear that we could see the fishes swimming about, and one poked up his head at us. He had a dark body, with little silvery gleams when he turned."

"I expect that was a Perch, boy. He is found in clear rivers and lakes in all temperate countries of Europe except Spain, and eats an enormous number of tiny fishes, insects, and worms. He's quite a small fellow here in England, but in India he has a cousin who is five feet long, and good to eat !

"The female Perch sometimes carries nearly three hundred thousand eggs, which she lays about May in a net-shaped band on the leaves of some water-plant. A gentleman once disturbed such a 'nest' full of small fry—that is, baby fish—and went back next day to see if the little Perch mother had forsaken it. Not a sign of her was to be seen, nor of her newly hatched young, so he searched still further up the stream. At last he found the mother Perch guarding her little ones in a hole she had scooped for them in the sand, where she thought they would be safe from prying eyes.

"Quite a famous member of the Perch Family is the Climbing Perch. By means of his rough-scaled spiny fins he can drag himself some distance on land, and one was once seen to climb five feet up the stem of a palm tree. It rather puzzled me when first I went to Ceylon—the Climbing Perch is found there and in India—why he should want to



Lake Fish

A FEW OF THE WATER-FOLK

leave the river, since water is certainly his native element.

“But in the hot season I understood, for I saw how ponds that were not shaded became almost dry, and how miserable the fish looked in their muddy shallows. So I was no longer surprised that this curious little creature, whose instinct tells him that in more sheltered spots there may be water still, should climb the bank of his once happy home and set out upon his travels. ‘How does he breathe on land?’ By means of a wonderful special organ which allows him to breathe in air. He holds sufficient water in his mouth to keep his gills moist, and so long as this water lasts he is all right.”

“But why did that one you told us about just now want to climb a tree?” asked Val, who considered the Climbing Perch by far the funniest fish of which he had heard.

“Perhaps to drink the dew collected in the hollow of the leaves; or he may have been after insects. Fish are very fond of flies, you know, and it is quite likely that some of these would settle in the leaf-cup. Considering that he is only about six to eight inches long, I think it’s very brave of him to be so venturesome. As a rule he always travels by night, but sometimes the sun rises before he can find another pond; and he has been seen on a dusty road at mid-day.

“A very different fish from the Perch is the long-

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

bodied Perch, the 'Fresh-water Pirate.' So greedy is he that besides eating Trout and Carp, and any other fishes he can get hold of—except a full-grown spiny-finned Perch—he preys upon Voles and Waterfowl. His favourite method of catching these is to hide beneath a shelving bank, or to lie like a log in the water, until some unwary creature ventures within his reach ; then he makes a sudden dart at it, and drags it down to devour at leisure. Sometimes he even turns cannibal, and makes a meal of his own young ! He's a powerful fish, often weighing as much as thirty-six pounds, and measuring over forty inches. His mate is larger than he, and lays countless numbers of eggs. He's said to be very fond of her, though you might not think it of him. Someone who was studying the ways of fish-folk, captured a mother Pike during the breeding season ; the father fish followed her to the edge of the water, and wouldn't be driven away from the spot where he had seen her disappear. He seemed to think that if he waited long enough she would surely come back to him.

"Pike are well-known in the rivers and lakes of temperate regions of the three Northern continents, and are greatly disliked by sportsmen, since they destroy so many Trout and spoil the fishing.

"The common Carp is quite a big fish, too, and grows extremely fat. Certain members of his family eat only vegetable food, while others like insects and



Pike



Carp

A FEW OF THE WATER-FOLK

water creatures, and sometimes, alas, each other. He was brought to England from China, about four hundred years ago; and is now well-known in Germany and Sweden. It is said that he lives to a very great age—two hundred years or so. When he gets very old his scales become grey and white.

“In winter-time he buries himself in the mud at the bottom of his pond or river, and no matter how thickly the ice may freeze, he does not mind the cold. A Carp might be frozen in a block of ice, and sent for a long sea voyage without anything happening to him. And if the ice were tossed into a sun-lit river to melt, as soon as it set him free he would be quite alive again, and go off to see what he could find to eat.

“Numbers of fishes with different names belong to the Carp Tribe—the Barbel, Gudgeon, Tench, Roach, Cub, Dace, Minnow, and I don't know how many more! Gold-fish are Golden Carp, and the Bleak, whose beautiful rainbow-tinted scales are used for making artificial pearls, is a Carp, too.

“A very important fish is the Cod. A great many thousands of little sick children have been made strong and well again by being dosed with cod-liver oil, and in Newfoundland, the oldest colony of Great Britain, for hundreds of years catching and curing Codfish has been the chief livelihood of its people. The men do most of the fishing, but the women and children help to split the fish open, and to salt them ready to send all over the world. ‘Cured’

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

Cod's-flesh was actually used as money at one time, other food-stuffs being given in exchange for it. Some Cod weigh nearly a hundred pounds; great shoals of them swarm off the Dogger Bank, as well as off Newfoundland. Of all fish found in Northern Seas, I should say that they are the most useful to man.

"I wonder if you know which is the 'Royal' fish—the one that Edward II. decreed should always belong to the King of England when found in English waters? It's the Sturgeon, from whose roe a very expensive dainty called Caviare is made. He is very seldom found over here, but there are any number of Sturgeon in the river Volga, where they root about in the mud and sand at the bottom for worms. They pick these up with slender feelers that grow inside the mouth; these are just like fingers, as you would see if you could watch him at work. You're fond of good things, Val"—Val had just had a third slice of walnut cake!—"so you'll be interested to hear that the isinglass used for making jelly comes from the Sturgeon's air bladder. He's an extremely handsome fish, his glistening scales flashing all sorts of colours in the sun.

"Another very extraordinary fish is the Mud-fish of Africa; an enormous creature six feet long which buries himself in a nest of mud when the river in which he lives dries up, and goes to sleep until it fills again. He's very thin then, for he has been living on his fat, and it takes some time to get



Cod



Sturgeon

A FEW OF THE WATER-FOLK

into good condition again. When awake he often comes up to the surface of the water to breathe in air, for he is one of the few fish with lungs.

"Someone once watched a pair of African Mud-fish at spawning time. The mother fish laid her eggs in a hole about a foot deep at the edge of a swamp, and then went off with a waggle of her tail, as if she intended to have no more to do with them. But the father stayed beside them until they hatched, which took about eight days. Every now and then he stirred them with his tail, so that the air could get to them. The young Mud-fish were very like baby tadpoles.

"There's a Mud-fish in South America that is four feet long, and, as with the African Mud-fish, his teeth are shaped 'like the antlers of a deer' and fit into each other when his jaws are closed, so as to make a most powerful crushing mill. He eats huge quantities of large shell fish, and when the dry season comes he has stored up plenty of fat. He and his mate go to sleep at this time in a long burrow, having 'shut the door' by plugging up the entrance, in which they have made a number of air holes, with a lump of clay. Their eggs are laid in a burrow in a swamp; and the father fish has to mind them."

"Daddy wouldn't like that at all," remarked Val. "He says in the letter he wrote last night that he feels quite shy with our new baby—it stares at him so, you know."

HUNDRED BEST ANIMALS

"Mother says it's lovely!" Nancy cried indignantly, and Val gave a queer little grunt.

"I wish there'd been time for you to tell us about those Whales," he remarked to the Grey Man, changing the conversation. "We've heard of heaps of all sorts of animals, more than the hundred you promised to tell us of, but I'm sure we don't know which we would call the 'best'!"

"I never expected you would, old fellow," smiled the Grey Man. "When all's told, each animal is the 'best' in his own place and the surroundings in which Nature has fitted him to live. We come to understand the highest examples of the different animals—call them best if you will—by comparing them with others of the same species below them in the scale, whether of physical strength and beauty or intelligence. All through our pleasant talks you will have noticed this."

And now the humming of the car outside told it was time for the twins to go. "I wonder if our baby's got his teeth yet," was all Val said as he picked up Billy. But he felt in the dark for the Grey Man's hand, and gave it a big squeeze. Nancy didn't say anything, because she couldn't; and the Grey Man understood.

"I shall be looking forward to the spring," he said to her, very softly. And as Val closed the door behind them, Milady sprang to her master's breast and purred.



